

Here We Stand United

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Summary: Lydia's just a princess of a fallen kingdom forced to turn to the life of a pirate to survive. When she's thrown overboard during a storm and taken prisoner by the Outcasts, she meets dragon trainers. Now, the Ereborians and Vikings must team up to stop Alvin from claiming the mountain stronghold's wealth and an evil that hasn't been seen in a hundred years.

1. Chapter 1

Hey there guys! So, I've absolutely not a clue where this idea came from but it appeared and would not leave me alone until I posted it.

This is my first fanfic for the Hobbit AND How To Train Your Dragon, and both are AU, so...

In this story, all the Berk teens are about sixteen/seventeen, and it goes kind of AU before "We Are Family" on the TV series.

Bilbo is a girl-Bilba Baggins. (I know, not original...at all, and rather sucky.) Thorin and his Company did not reclaim Erebor, and Gandalf is not in the story. Frodo is Thorin and Bilba's son, and my OC Lydia is their daughter, and she's about sixteen while Frodo is eighteen. They're all human and age normally. This will mostly be in Lydia's point of view.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

Lydia speaking in Khuzdul

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* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 1

Lydia's eyes fluttered open, and quickly snapped shut. It was too bright out. Damn it, how many times had she told Fili and Kili to not open the window in her room below deck? She was going to hit them when she saw them next.

Speaking of her horrid cousins, why hadn't they sent Gimli in here after her yet? They would never allow their little cousin to sleep so late. And why hadn't Frodo spoken yet? He had this bad tendency to talk to himself, and she could usually hear his mumbling from down the hall, or when he sometimes wandered into her small space, thinking it was his.

Finally, she opened her eyes, and she groaned as she remembered everything that had happened. She had been hoping the nightmare with that storm and the swimming dragon had all been some kind of twisted dream, but it wasn't. She was still locked in a dungeon, held prisoner by a group that called themselves "The Outcasts." Wonderful. Frodo was never going to let her live this down.

She heard them before she saw them, and she quickly closed her eyes and evened out her breathing, hoping they would think she was asleep.

No such luck.

"We know you're awake girl. Might as well open your eyes." Grimacing, Lydia reluctantly complied, sitting up straight and staring reproachfully at the man who called himself Alvin the Treacherous. He was a big man, broad at the shoulders, and waist, but his legs were almost comically skinny. If she wasn't in a situation like this, she might have laughed. As it was, she dared not for fear he would hit her. She knew he would not hold back like her bigger, stronger companions would whenever they trained.

Alvin had a big, dark beard, and the look in his eyes reminded her of Dwalin, except Dwalin was taller, and he had tattoos that had great significant value in Khuzdul, and it seemed Alvin could easily beat Dwalin in terms of how bulky he was, but Dwalin was probably a better warrior, and a stronger one. She met his dark glare, staring unflinchingly into his black, soulless eyes. Her 'adad had long ago taught her to never show fear.

And so began the flow of questions.

Alvin was always thorough with his questions, but also very

repetitive. He reminded her of Dori in that way, although Dori had more imagination than Alvin, and was a great deal nicer, and the eldest brother of Ri might have taken offense to her comparing him to this brute, but he was the only reference she had.

"What's your name?" Alvin would always ask, and Lydia would just blink at him, not once even considering telling him who she was. Someone such as him had no right to know her full title. Alvin would growl in frustration and continue the questions,

"Where are you from?" Lydia just yawned over exaggeratedly, and study her nails in a bored fashion. It was so amusing to do that, because it always enraged the broad Outcast. He growled again, louder this time, and would pause his questions to threaten her, which seemed to be the only area where he got imaginative.

Good for him.

And the next question? "Where did you learn to fight like that?" Ha! As if he would even know if she told him! Lydia couldn't just say, matter-of-factly, 'Well, the Head Guard of the Kingdom of Erebor is great friends with my 'adad, who just so happens to be the fallen King Under the Mountain, and they all insisted I know how to fight with every weapon.' Yeah, that'd go over great. And once Alvin deciphered all of that information, he'd just have a field day with the fact that, yes, she was a princess, technically.

Then his two goons, one smaller than him and probably smarter, and the other the same size but probably dumber, would scowl at her something fierce, give her some disgusting gruel and murky water, before all three of them would head back above ground, leaving her to wallow in her self-pity in this dark hole and wonder if her family had even survived.

Today, they broke the pattern, turning their attention towards the cell next to her, which she hadn't even realized was occupied until now. There were five teens there, all of them about her age, and half of them asleep.

She crawled towards the cell next to her, all too happy to ignore the slop they called food in favor of pressing her face against the bars and watching with honest curiosity.

There were three blonds. Two were skinny and looked very similar, practically identical, and if she had to guess she would say they were twins. The third was taller, with a little more meat on her bones, and a scowl on her face. She was really pretty, and Lydia felt a twinge of envy, tugging on her own, stringy and braided dark hair that was just like her 'adad's.

There was another boy, broad and muscular, with hair nearly as dark as her own, and dark, serious eyes, with his facial features kind and harsh at the same time. Odd, yet ruggedly handsome.

The final teen, was another boy with bright red hair and freckles dusted across his nose. Although, to look at him, you might think him a girl, she could tell he was a boy if she stared at him for a minute. His eyes were a brilliant green, and he was missing a leg, a slab of metal where the limb should have been.

Alvin barked at the teens for a while, and Lydia felt herself becoming bored. It was just going to be like the routine he'd had with her for...how long had she been here? Three days? A week? Time didn't seem to pass here, and she hated it. She felt disconnected, and had no way of knowing what was going on outside of her cell. Had her family survived? Would they show up, or skip the island? When did the sun rise and moon set? She didn't know.

Lydia was brought from her musings when she heard the unmistakable sound of someone being slapped. One of the scrawny blond kids, the girl if she was not mistaken, had just been slapped. She felt rage boil inside of her. She hated when she saw anything resembling abuse. It was what drove her to drastic measures whenever they raided a village. Not one of the Ereborians she travelled with would even consider raising a hand against someone they cared about unless it was in a good-natured tussle.

_ "Bastard weakling! Why don't you give me a sword and we'll have a **fair **fight!" _Lydia snarled, and Alvin jumped, his dark gaze falling on Lydia once again before he began to laugh. Lydia glared holes into his head as he kept laughing to his minions about language barriers and such, not knowing that Lydia understood everything he said and was growing angrier by the second. What she wouldn't give for one of Nori's throwing knives she could deal with Alvin the only way she knew how; with violence.

"Leave 'em be. C'mon, let's go," Alvin snickered and Lydia glared until she was sure he was gone, and then she glanced back at the girl who was holding her already bruised face.

"You okay?" Lydia asked quietly, but gruffly. She wasn't entirely sure she got that right, or even if that was their language, but she was rewarded for her troubles.

"Yeah, fine. I think the ass was holding back. Thanks. I'm Ruffnut, by the way. The ugly one is my twin, Tuffnut. Who are you?" Ruffnut asked, her light-colored blue eyes falling on Lydia's ice one. Lydia offered a small, genuine smile. She was glad Ruffnut was okay.

Like her Mother had always insisted, Lydia stood and said with a bow, "Lydia of the line of Durin, at your service."

* * *

><p>So, like it, or hate it?</p>

Review please!

2. Chapter 2

Hello! Welcome back to my crossover! I'm glad people liked it!

I forgot to mention, also in this story, we will see Merry and Pippin! It'll be later, though, and here's a hint, they'll be twins in this story! :)

Rated-T

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* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 2

The hours flew by, turning into days, and the days gradually turned into a week. How did she know this? Alvin took the Berk teens above ground for a few hours every day at a certain time. It was the only way she knew the date had changed, and the only thing that kept her sane was talking to the other teens.

She'd learned they were from an island called Berk, and that the Outcasts had once lived there as well, until they were banished for attempting to overthrow the chief, who she was told was actually the red-head's father. The red-head was Hiccup, and apparently hiccup meant runt. For years, his own father had been ashamed of him, until the day he trained a dragon, a Night Fury.

At first, the Vikings had been as wary of dragons as the Ereborians would have been if Lydia herself had suggested something similar, but when Hiccup and his friends had proven that they could trust dragons, could work with them, a tentative alliance began that was still touch-and-go to this day, though the dragons would never attack the people of Berk unless it was a rogue dragon doing the attacking.

That was what Alvin wanted from them now. He wanted these teenagers from Berk, the first dragon riders, to teach him and his savage people how to train their own dragons. Hiccup and his friends refused, naturally, and now Alvin was bound and determined to get it out of them, one way or another.

Even after they all came back beat up, bloodied and battered, there was a defiance and pride in all of their eyes, and she always knew without even asking that they had not said a word of what Alvin wanted to hear.

With her eyes she watched, and with her ears she listened, using all of Nori's stealth training, picking up speaking patterns, looking for weaknesses in guards, gradually getting a feel for her surroundings and her new prison.

Then the day came when Alvin and his men came into the dungeon and bodily removed Lydia alongside the other teens that were held prisoner. It threw the pattern off and she was caught slightly

unawares, floundering to catch her metaphorical balance as she was dragged above ground for the first time in possibly weeks, and she flinched away from the bright light of the sun that shone in her eyes, blinding her, despite how weak it was here compared to Dale, outside Erebor. They were brought to a closed in arena that reminded her slightly of their training area aboard their pirate ship.

Suddenly Alvin grabbed her by the throat and lifted her slightly off the rocky ground. Snarling quietly to herself, she dug her fingernails into his meaty fist and glared darkly at him. "Now, you can show us how this training business is done, or I snap her neck," Alvin threatened with a chuckle. He would probably be very happy with either option. Snarling quietly, she began trying to pry his hands from her neck as the minutes ticked by.

None of the teens wanted to be the first to speak and betray their home, but not one of them wanted to watch Lydia die right in front of them.

The teens did not reply, and Alvin's grip on her throat tightened. "I'm waiting," he hissed, glaring at Hiccup. Still they hesitated and Lydia's vision started going dark around the edges even while she hissed like a snake, still struggling to free herself.

"Mahal damn it! Lemme go already!" Lydia finally roared with what little air she had left, fed up with being strangled, and startling Alvin. As far as the Outcasts knew, Lydia didn't know any of their language, and while to begin with it had been spotty at best, she had gradually adapted and learned it. Alvin laughed with twisted delight and released her, and she fell to the ground and landed on her butt. She had no time to recover, as then Alvin grabbed her dark, braided hair and yanked on it, causing Lydia to howl in pain and outrage. To touch an Ereborian's braids without their consent was a crime punishable by death, especially if that Ereborian was of the line of Durin.

"Leggo Leggo Leggo! Just you wait! My family will come and when my 'adad hears about this, he'll skin you alive!" Lydia shrieked, and Alvin paused.

"'Adad, huh? That's an Ereborian word, of the Khuzdul language. If I didn't know better, I might guess you hailed from that land, little girl, but that's not possible. Erebor fell to a red Fire Drake years ago, and unless I'm mistaken, everyone perished or disappeared," Alvin taunted, and Lydia became enraged. She saw red.

_ "What do you know you bastard?! I'll tear you apart! I'll rip out your beard and have you tarred before all Ereborians when we reclaim our kingdom from Smaug! I'll have you disgraced before all and then you will hang in front of the great iron doors of my forefathers as a reminder of what happens to those who mess with Durin's line!" _Lydia howled, but of course Alvin could not understand her, because in her rage she had slipped back into Khuzdul.

"Where did a little thing like you learn Khuzdul? Those Ereborians guard their heritage jealously," Alvin mused, ignoring Lydia's struggles, before he laughed again and said, "ah, no matter. Savage! Release the Cauldron! I'm sure it'll make quick work of this little one!" Alvin shouted, and then threw Lydia into the center of the

arena, exiting with the Berk teens being dragged out and the gate closed with a foreboding finality.

She beat back the panic as another, massive wooden gate was cranked open, and she got a good look at the dragon Alvin wanted to destroy her by. Its scales were a deep, sea blue, obviously so it didn't stand out in the ocean, and it had a long, slender neck that seemed to twist around a bit. There was a horn on the top front of its head, and it had a large jaw, reminding her slightly of a bird she'd once seen called a pelican. Its body was small but muscular, and its tail was broad, large, fanned at the end, and powerful. It had large wings with beautiful designs on it, and had she been more like her mother, she would have stopped in her hate-fest to appreciate such beauty in such a graceful creature, but she was more like her 'adad than her Mam. She looked into its eyes briefly, determined to not show fear, and froze.

It was the same species of the dragon that had attacked their ship! She quickly broke its gaze for a moment, digesting this information. Filled with new courage, Lydia locked eyes with the creature like she had the one that attacked her ship, and something clicked in her head. Was it...was it the same dragon? That look in its eyes, one that spoke of sorrow, and hunger, was unlike anything she'd ever seen before, and Lydia paused for a moment.

Then a large clang echoed throughout the arena, spurring the dragon to action. It roared, showing its fangs and the water gathered in its mouth, which puzzled her. She didn't have time to think on it as suddenly a jet stream of water fired at her. That was when she decided it was okay to run. She ducked around the ring, trying to evade the dragon and its sharp teeth, but it easily kept up. Her breathing remained steady since she was in top physical condition, but she had no idea how long she could keep it up.

"Lydia! Lydia, listen to me! You have to stand your ground, and approach it slowly and cautiously. Show him your a friend!" Hiccup shouted to her. Lydia tried to process this information as quickly as her brain would allow. How was she supposed to approach it calmly when it was chasing her?!

"Hey! Stupid dragon! Look at me! Neh!" Snotlout shouted, standing above the dome and waving his arms around, mocking the dragon to distract it. The Cauldron didn't seem to take too kindly to that as it shot a stream of water right at the Viking teen, hitting him dead-on. Snotlout swore from the pain, but his idiocy have given Lydia the gap and time she needed. Slowly, she approached, hands raised in a placating manner as she began to hum randomly. She didn't even know what she was humming, but the Cauldron paused, its glowing yellow eyes seeming to soften as it lowered its long neck to sniff at her uncertainly.

Once again, they locked eyes. For what seemed like an eternity they stood there, dragon and Ereborian, and then the dragon lowered its head and pushed its snout into her open hand, which was still extended towards the beast. Awed by the cool touch of its scales, Lydia began to gently and hesitantly pet the beast. It let out a gentle purr, and Lydia smiled slightly. After everything, who would of thought she'd form a tentative friendship with a dragon?

Roughly, she was yanked away, by Alvin himself, and while the

Scauldron roared it was dragged back to its cage. Lydia felt despair wash over her as she craned her neck to get one last glance at **_her_ ** dragon before she was taken back below ground, away from the weak sunlight and was consumed by darkness once again.

* * *

><p>Ha! Did you think they were going to escape?! With the help of JUST this one dragon?! No! It's not that simple, it never is!</p>

I'm not sure how I felt about this chapter. It was basically a filler chapter. The good parts of the story are coming up next! It's completely different than the rough draft I had you read, 'Lyn!

Until next time, readers!

REVIEW!

3. Chapter 3

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

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Things you need to know

Lydia speaking in Khuzdul

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><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 3

"You really connected with that Scauldron, Lydia," Hiccup said when he was sure that Alvin and his goons had left. He was trying to be encouraging, but failing miserably. Their situation was really starting to sink in, and he was slowly losing hope. They'd all been dumped in separate cages this time, but despite that, Lydia didn't hear a word Hiccup had said and might as well have been millions of miles away. She was too busy thinking.

Her time here was up. Alvin now knew she could adapt to anything he threw at her, and he knew she knew some Ereborian customs. It was only a matter of time before the pieces of the puzzle fell into place in his mind, and she needed to be long gone by the time that happened. The last thing she needed was for Alvin to find out her full title and take advantage of her heritage.

So, she put all the training Nori had ever given her to use, her mind working as fast as it could to piece together all the information she'd observed during that one trip above ground and then back below.

They were in pretty deep, as far as she could tell, so that put her at a distinct disadvantage, considering she could easily be caught in that amount of time. From what little she knew of the island when she was washed ashore and before she had had a scuffle with the Outcasts, there was no other land for miles, and the ships were closely guarded. Dragon attacks happened often, but most of the Outcasts were down right stupid. This was to her advantage considering the dumbest of them all had been entrusted with the keys to all the cells. However, this likely also meant that he was the strongest right after Alvin himself. If she could just get to the Scauldron, though...

"Listen, I have a plan, but you have to trust me," Lydia said quickly as she suddenly spun back towards the Viking teen, startling him. He'd been concerned for a moment, wondering if something was wrong for her, and had stepped forward to get her attention when she spun around, which was why he fell back a few steps before regaining his balance. Hiccup nodded mutely so Lydia continued, "I need Ruffnut, Tuffnut, and Snotlout to keep the guard with the keys distracted when they come with the food. I'll slide out to get to the Scauldron and fly off to get help. You just have to tell me which way I'm going to get to Berk and who I'm looking for."

Hiccup hesitated. He had known Lydia for barely a week, and also knew next to nothing about her. How could he just trust her like that? Lydia quickly lost patience with the intelligent teen.

"You're with me or you're against me. Either way I will be attempting this escape because there isn't much time left."

Hiccup made his decision quickly after that. "Berk is a few miles North of here. It's a large island surrounded by slightly smaller islands and it's the only one inhabited around here. Impossible to miss. You're looking for my dad, Stoic the Vast. Tell him you know me, and please, tell him your full title, not this half-thing you gave us." Lydia looked momentarily surprised that Hiccup had caught on to that, but then she smirked. So, his intelligence was higher than she thought. It was something to be appreciated when all of her family thought with their muscles.

"Very well, Hiccup, and thank you."

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

It wasn't too much later that Alvin's goon came down with the slop they called food. Even though it had probably only been a few hours, the air in the dungeon was tense as everyone prepared for the escape. Lydia was coiled tensely, but she did not let it show. If her apprehension showed, the guard would get suspicious. She kind of wished she had taken Nori up on his offer of carrying around one of her lock picks, though. It would make things slightly easier as in she wouldn't have to steal the keys to be freed.

"Hey ugly! You gonna let us out yet?" Ruffnut jeered, a nasty look on her face as she glared at the idiot.

"Uh..."

"Your uglier face is confusing him!" Tuffnut shouted to his twin, enraging her. The two flung themselves against their cages to fight, but unfortunately for them and fortunately for everyone else, Snotlout's was in between theirs.

"I demand that you either give me a new cell or put these two in the same one!" Snotlout shrieked, ducking away from their flailing limbs as they screeched and roared at each other. The ruckus they were causing successfully distracted the guard, and as he walked past Lydia's cell to take care of all the noise, Lydia's hand shot out and snatched the key ring from his belt loop.

_ "Yes!" _

The Ereborian quickly set to work, twisting her arm through the bars to fiddle with the lock. Alvin's dumb guard was quickly getting the noise level under control and it was only a matter of seconds before he turned around and saw her trying to unlock her cage. He'd successfully hit Tuffnut upside the head to shut him up, and was turning to Ruffnut and Snotlout, who were now shouting at each other to keep his attention.

_ Five... _

Snotlout received a hard punch to the face, causing him to shriek some more.

_ Four... _

Only when he got hit a few more times did he finally shut up and fall back to sit against the wall of his cage and sulk. Ruffnut kept taunting Alvin's left hand man as he turned to her.

_ Three... _

Ruffnut was clearly smarter than her brother, Snotlout, and Alvin's goon, because she successfully avoided all of his attacks while still keeping his attention on her. However, her luck quickly ran out as the man managed to fit his beefy arm through the bars and grab her by the throat.

_ Two... _

Hiccup and Astrid watched worriedly as Ruffnut's struggles became weaker and Lydia kept trying to find the right key for the lock, down to her last few keys. The man finally flung Ruffnut to the ground and started to turn back towards the other teens. Time seemed to stop

_ One... CLICK. _

_ "Gotcha!" _

Just as the man turned back around, Lydia was free, and she flung the gate wide before lunging towards him, silent like Nori but using tactics Dwalin had taught her. Just as the idiot Outcast turned back

around, the Ereborian slammed into him. Since he was caught off guard, her momentum managed to knock him back, and she heard a clang as his helmeted head bounced off the metal bars. She didn't stick around to see what happened next.

Her memory served her well as she weaved through the underground halls, and hearing no raised alarms, she could only assume the Viking teens had managed to keep the bumbling buffoon distracted. She was not about to waste this new advantage handed to her.

At the last corner, she paused and cautiously peered around into the next room. Grinning because the coast was clear, she sprinted to the only cage holding a Scauldron, and the dragon looked at her curiously as she began fumbling with the many keys again.

"Hey...hey boy, you remember me, right? Whaddya say we get out of here, huh?" Lydia murmured, smiling to herself as the fourth key she tried turned out to be the right one and the gate to the dragon's cage swung open. The Scauldron lumbered out, spreading its massive wings as it did so and giving her a reptilian smile before nudging her with its head. "Yeah glad to see you too, but let's get out of here."

Gently, she grabbed purchase on the Scauldron's scales and tugged it along with her, heading above ground. However, it seemed their luck had run out. Shouting started echoing through the caverns and Lydia shrieked as several fully armed Outcasts came into view, blocking the only exit she knew of. She was at a distinct disadvantage now. Suddenly, the Scauldron straightened up and hovered protectively over the Princess as it sprayed super-heated water at the Outcasts, causing them to scatter.

Next thing she knew, the dragon had gently picked her up by her shirt and tossed her onto its back, where she slid down its neck to be seated at the base. It spread its large wings and barreled its way out into the weak sunshine, spread its massive wings as wide as it could, and took to the air. With a few mighty strokes, they were lifted high into the air and out of Alvin's range.

Lydia smiled as she turned the Scauldron Northward and headed for Berk.

* * *

><p>And, chapter 3! It was the longest chapter so far, with some action there! What did you all think?<p>

REVIEW PLEASE!

4. Chapter 4

Hey guys! Here's chapter four for yah! So I thought I'd have a chapter where you see how the Ereborians are doing! How do you all feel about Dori? I hope you like him because it's more from his perspective with a little Frodo! Lemme know how I did with them!

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Chapter 4

Dori sighed worriedly as more yelling reached his ears. Dwalin, Balin, Thorin, and Bilba were still arguing about what to do. Dwalin was convinced they should hold a funeral, having given up all hope that the Princess was still alive, while Bilba raged at him for daring to suggest such a thing. Thorin was probably developing a headache with his wife's screeching, which would surely make him irritable, and Balin was once again being the voice of reason, saying they should carefully comb their way through all the towns on the surrounding islands, saying Lydia was intelligent enough to wait for them somewhere where she could easily be found.

Another roar rang through the ship, the word Khuzdul in origin, and all fell blessedly silent. Apparently, Thorin had had more than enough of the bickering and decided to put a quick end to it.

Dori gave a wry, humorless chuckle as he headed above deck to check on Ori, an irrational fear overrunning his mind for his little brother's safety. He found his little brother dressed in his cloak, standing on deck and studying a nearby island, one that was all bleak, unforgiving rock with no signs of life, which was why Thorin thought it was safe to dock off shore, where no one would bother them while they debated their next move. Ori was fascinated by it for some reason, drawing pictures of it and even having nightmares.

"Ori, whatever is the matter?" Dori asked softly, placing a hand on his youngest brother's shoulder. Ori jumped, having been so lost in thought he didn't even notice Dori's presence.

"Dori...I...nothing is wrong, per se. I'm worried about Lydia, but at the same time I feel I should be more concerned for our lives rather than hers...there's something very wrong with that island, Dori," Ori said, still not looking at his brother, and therefore did not see the look on his face. Dori opened his mouth to reply, but was cut off as Ori suddenly turned around and said insistently, "I want to go investigate, Dori!"

"Absolutely not!" Dori replied immediately, and Ori's face fell, before a determined look crossed his countenance, and Dori knew he would argue, if not for another voice cutting smoothly into their

conversation.

"Dor's right, Ori. It's too dangerous for you to head on out there. I'll check it out, and I'm sure Mother Hen over there will be coming along as well." Dori and Ori turned as their thief of a brother stepped out of the shadows. Most people would be surprised at how one moment there seemed to be no one there, and the next there was a man with an elaborate, hard-to-forget hairstyle walking towards them and intruding on what might have been a private conversation. However, growing up with Nori, one came to expect him to be just around any corner, lurking there and spying on anyone he thought was worth his time at the moment. Even the other Ereborians, after seven years at sea with him, were no longer surprised by him, which irked Nori to no end.

Dori's mouth opened and closed in shock at his brother's suggestion, while Ori looked like a kicked puppy. "Dori...you'll go with Nori, right? I'd feel a lot better if you both went together..." Dori glanced at both of his brothers, and knew it was impossible to say "no." So, with a deep long-suffering sigh, Dori nodded in agreement, the three brothers entirely unaware of the curly-haired prince watching from a dark corner.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

Nori sighed for what felt like the hundredth time, and Dori was about ready to box his little brother's ears for it. Honestly, if he was such a hindrance, why in Mahal's name had he volunteered Dori for this? Finally, finally, the thief spoke up. "Dori..." Dori looked expectantly at his younger brother, even as he kept rowing the boat. Nori met his pale gaze, but then looked away, much to Dori's annoyance. "Never mind."

Damn it!

"Nori, for Mahal's sake, just spit it out!" Dori snapped, his patience finally snapped. He was very patient with Ori, still seeing him as the small child he had raised, but Nori was another story. The thief got under his skin at the best of times and right now he was in a terrible mood. It had started to drizzle, and a fog had fallen over the water. While this hid their small boat, it made it harder for them to see. Now that he thought about it, Ori was right. There was something terribly wrong with this place. The land was too bleak, too quiet, the water too still, as though the island was trying too hard to look uninhabited, and he wanted nothing more than for Nori to realize this as well so they could turn back, maybe convince Thorin it was in their best interest to move along...

"Dori, do you hate me?" Nori suddenly blurted, jolting Dori rather violently from his brooding thoughts as he stared in shock at his equally shocked younger brother. Nori looked as though he had not meant to say that and that he wanted to yank the words right back as soon as he said them.

"No...what brought along such a ridiculous notion?"

Nori hesitated, and then he glanced away and it was clear he had no intention of saying anything on the subject. Dori glared darkly at his brother, as though the force of his gaze alone could either bore a hole in his head or make his stubborn brother speak his mind for

once.

It was another few minutes before their little boat touched the shore of the rocky, unforgiving land, and the two elder Ri brothers splashed ashore. "Stick close to me and stay quiet." Nori seemed to transform. Gone was the caring brother who doted on Ori and stole tea and other nice things for Dori, in his place was the King of Thieves, Lord of the Underworld. Dori didn't like it, but it did come in handy.

Which was why he didn't protest when Nori led the way over the barren landscape. The mists swirled around them and Dori found it difficult to navigate, so he stuck to Nori like glue. He had no intention of getting lost any time soon. Nori seemed to know exactly where he was going despite the limited visibility, so when he stopped, Dori stopped as well, hovering right over his brother, frowning deeply.

"What is it?"

"Dori, shut up and head back to the boat! I'll meet you there. This island is definitely inhabited," Nori hissed. Without waiting for his older brother to reply, he disappeared into the mist, leaving Dori standing there fuming and having to navigate back to the boat himself.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

He watched quietly as Ori watched the horizon, tense and silent. The young scribe was obviously worried about his brothers. Frodo knew that feeling of worry. For a week and a half, he'd been worrying in the very same way, about his little sister. He knew she could take care of herself and was an excellent warrior, but older siblings had rights to worry. It came with the territory. So, understanding his friend's pain a little, he walked over to stand beside him. Ori didn't even notice, so Frodo cleared his throat to gain the younger's attention.

Ori jumped, but relaxed when he saw it was only Frodo. "Yes, Frodo?" Ori asked hesitantly. He was unsure if the Prince knew where his brothers had gone or if he would be upset with him letting them go.

"There's no need to worry about Dori and Nori. Dori's the strongest among us and there's not a cell in the world that could hold Nori. Besides, the island is likely uninhabited. I doubt even small animals could live there," Frodo said gently. Ori risked a glance at his friend, and was relieved to see the look of understanding and kindness in his ice-like eyes. Frodo was nothing like Thorin. He smiled a lot and he was always relatively happy, if not a little shy and brooding, but he had a good heart and Bilba's gentle nature.

Ori smiled hesitantly and nodded, hoping Frodo bought it, but he knew there was no such luck when Frodo frowned at him, but he left it alone, walking off to help when his cousins raced past, trying (and failing) to reign Gimli in, who was running around with Kili's bow and screaming about something. Even though he was nearly of age, he still acted like a little kid, especially when his maniac "babysitters" gave him sweets. That was what it looked like Kili and Fili had done, the fools. Ori laughed quietly despite himself, but

turned back around when he heard the sound of one of the lifeboats being cranked back up. Nori hopped on deck, shrouded in darkness.

"Nori, what's out there? Where's Dori?" Ori asked worriedly, studying his brother. Nori's face was haggard, his expression defeated and the confidence gone from his eyes.

"Bad news little brother. That island is definitely not safe. Now, I need to talk to Thorin about a rescue mission."

* * *

><p>Voila! Chapter 4! I have big, big plans for this story. Let me know what you thought!</p>

Oh, and the Ereborian's ages right now in the story are:

Thorin: 38

Bilba: 36

Balin: 40

Dwalin: 34

Bifur: 35

Bofur: 33

Bombur: 30

Oin: 43

Gloin: 34

Dori: 36

Nori: 29

Ori: 19

Fili: 23

Kili: 20

Frodo: 18

Lydia: 16

Gimli: 11

If you're wondering how old everyone was when Erebor fell, just subtract eleven from all their ages. Thanks for reading!

REVIEW PLEASE!

Hey guys! So in honor of Halloween, I've decided to write a semi-scary chapter with Lydia and Erebor's fall. Oh, btw, after much thought and many, many long hours of deep contemplation, I have decided, that in this story, Bofur will also be female. (good thing our beloved miner and toymaker didn't make an appearance before this or this note here would have thrown several of you through a loop.) Enjoy!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

Lydia speaking in Khuzdul

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 5

It was warm, oppressingly hot. She coughed as she blearily opened her eyes, dragged forcefully from her dreams of her Mam's home. A wave of heat simmered in her room, distorting the images around her like some fake image. For an instant, she was afraid she was trapped in a nightmare, because all of her toys, beautifully carved by her 'Adad's friends, looked as though they were melting, and the grins on her friendly dolls suddenly looked evil. Then, she realized she was very much awake because she could hear screaming and...roaring...in the distance.

Gasping, choking for air, she scrambled out of her big, fluffy bed, stumbling towards the door even though she knew she wasn't supposed to be up and about. She was very scared, but also curious about what was going on, and it was that curiosity that prompted the sickly five-year old to rise from her bed and out the door. The halls were abandoned, and this confused her young mind. Servants were always near if she or her brother would need anything. Wait. Frodo!

She stumbled down the hidden short-cut to her brother's room and threw open the ornate door, crying in distress when she saw that her brother was gone, and the noises were growing louder. Greatly distressed now, she started to run, heading for her 'adad's office in search of him, because she needed her 'adad right now! 'Adad was safe and she most definitely didn't feel safe now.

However, she over-estimated the maze-like quality of her home because she quickly became lost, heading somehow deeper into her mountain than she'd ever been before, and people were starting to appear, running around frantically, taking no notice of her as she cried out

for attention. No luck or attention came, and she was knocked off her feet, her small knees scraping along the rock ground. Tears gathered in her eyes, and she began to cry, snot running from her nose as she hiccupped and wailed and coughed.

Suddenly she was scooped off her feet and cradled close to someone's chest. She buried her face in said chest and listened to the steady heartbeat, slowly calming down with the constant, unhurried rhythm, all the running and screaming fading away before she finally looked up, expecting to see her Mam. Instead, she saw a young, dark-haired woman who looked like maybe she was a little younger than Mister Dwalin. She had a gentle smile on her face, despite the fact that she was covered in grime, and a funny hat perched atop her dark locks. She was instantly fascinated by that hat, and the woman's braids. They swooped up! That wasn't supposed to happen...

_ "Where's your 'Amad little one?" _the elder female cooed, bouncing the five-year-old on her hip like she might for a small babe, and tears gathered in her eyes once again.

_ "Don't know! Can't find Mam or 'Adad or Frodo or Fili or Kili or Aunt Dis or Uncle Frerin or Mister Dwalin!" _she screamed loudly, startling the woman holding her. The girl was very loud and had a nice set of lungs on her despite her small stature and sickly state. Then she stiffened. Those were names associated with the royals. That meant she was holding the Princess of Erebor in her arms... was this really the little girl she'd been ordered to make so many toys for?

_ "Well. Let's go find them, little one. Tell me your name," _the woman said as she walked, holding the little one closely as she slowly calmed herself. She tried not to rush the princess, or let on that there was anything going on around them. She only hoped they could make it to the exit without too much trouble.

_ "Lydia, daughter of Thorin, Son of Thrain, Son or Thror of the line of Durin, Princess Under the Mountain, at your service," _the little girl said proudly. It had taken her forever to get it right after Balin had taught it to her, and her Mam had insisted that the "at your service" line be added in, not that Lydia minded. She liked helping people, and service meant help, right?

_ "Bofur, at yours," _the woman replied, smiling calmly at the polite girl as she hurried to her own home, thankfully near the exit. It had been the only place they could afford after their cousin Bifur had taken that axe to the head in a training accident with the guards. She could only hope her brother and Bifur were both alive and well, and had managed to escape with at least minimal harm to their persons.

However, the smooth sailing they'd had for a good ten minutes was quickly lost to them, as the ground began to rumble again, like giant footsteps coming towards them. It confused and scared Lydia, causing her to cry out, but Bofur quickly hushed her as they ducked down into a small, side passage. Bofur clutched the child close to her as the steps passed by, the tunnels becoming hotter as the beast breathed its fire upon any unfortunate guards. The footsteps came to a halt suddenly, and Bofur chanced looking up, freezing as she stared into a large amber eye. The beast stared at her for a moment, and smoke curled from its nostrils, before it moved on. Bofur breathed a sigh

of relief and waited until she was sure the dragon was gone before she ran back the way it had come from, still cradling Lydia close, even as the child sniffled and sneezed.

Lydia just hoped she didn't give nice Miss Bofur her cold.

Finally, her curiosity once again won over her instincts, and Lydia glanced up from Miss Bofur's shoulder, peering around, but didn't see much except black walls and smell this funny icky scent and people lying on the ground sleeping. Then, she started to make connections. The black stuff on the walls was hot marks, and the people on the ground...weren't sleeping. They had red life on them, the red life that came from her cuts whenever she fell, except they weren't getting patched up.

Then she screamed, because Mahal please no, that was... "Uncle Frerin!"

"NO!" Lydia screamed as she jolted upright, her eyes still seeing her uncle's scorched and blackened skeleton. Frerin had been so much fun, and her favorite to be around. He would always play with her, give her toys or make up new games, but the best was always the wooden swords and the lessons that came with them. He was slight, like her, due to being so sickly as a child, but he'd proved time and again that you didn't need to be a muscular warrior like her 'adad or Dwalin. It was her Uncle Frerin who'd first shown her what it meant to be a Durin. The right to be a warrior, if she so chose. Unlike most other females of Erebor, she could choose. It was soon after that her Mam had somehow managed to get that particular tradition overturned, and then her freedom to choose wasn't so special because all other females could now choose, but it was the thought that counted.

She was brought out of her depressing musings as the Cauldron's neck curled around her, prodding at her with his snout, and she forced a weak smile to her face. "I'm fine. Come on...you know, you need a name, don't you? How about..." she paused, thinking, and then genuinely smiled, "Frerin. Yes, you're Frerin. Come on, we've still got some Vikings to save and then Ereborians to find!"

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

All she'd seen was red fire, just like when Erebor fell, and it brought back bad memories. She screamed, jerking away from where the flames had come from, and discovered she'd moved too far as she tipped off Frerin and fell towards the water below. Ah, and she was not a strong swimmer, either.

Claws sank into her back and she hissed at the burning pain, and then she was jolted from her speedy fall to a gentle descent. However, she was not reassured, and she shrieked for her dragon, "Frerin!" The Cauldron snarled and flew over, growling at the dragon with its claws sunk into her back. She was dropped to the ground of an island, and Frerin landed nearby, still snarling. A voice boomed in Norse,

"Call off your dragon!"

With a snarl of rage, Lydia snapped, "Stop!" and Frerin settled slightly, but did not subside all the way. He was still aggressive

towards the red-headed, red-bearded Viking that landed, on the back of a Thunderdrum.

"Who are you, and where did you learn to ride a dragon?" the intimidating man demanded, and if she was any other girl, she would have shrunk in on herself, but she lived with Dwalin, her 'adad, and _**Bomber.**_It couldn't get any tougher or more intimidating than that. So she straightened to look the man in the eye, but something there...it was the same spark in Hiccup's eyes, so this must be Stoic the Vast.

She gave a swift bow and replied in short, choppy Norse, "Lydia, daughter of Thorin, the Son of Thrain, who was the Son of Thror, of the line Durin, Princess Under the Mountain, at your service. I hail from Erebor, in Middle Earth, before it fell to the Red Fire Drake Smaug. You are Stoic the Vast, yes? I met your son, Hiccup, when I was imprisoned by a group who called themselves the Outcasts. Your son sent me to tell you what I knew, and I wish to offer my skills as a warrior to help you fight the madman Alvin the Treacherous."

* * *

><p>*whew* that was some great plot progression. There is also BACKGROUND for this version of the characters! Yes, since this is AU, that is MY theory on how Bifur got that axe imbedded in his forehead.<p>

I hope you liked my creepy-ish chapter! Happy Halloween everybody!

Oh, and leave a review!

6. Chapter 6

Action, fighting, and Dori (+Erebilians galore)! Enjoy!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Erebilians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United<p>

Chapter 6

The darkness of the night was all-encompassing, and she saw very little as she attempted to peer through the mists over the water. They could have easily sailed right past their own boats if not for single lights on each ship and silent signals each dragon seemed to communicate to each other that only the young dragon rider, Fishlegs, could understand.

Lydia's grip tightened on the hilt of the axe she'd borrowed, and Frerin nudged her with his snout. Absentmindedly, she patted him, and he withdrew with a huff since she had not given him the proper attention. It was a miracle he even fit on the boat, because of how heavy his body was he could not soar the way was needed for the stealth attack, and Lydia did not feel like holding her breath underwater until she passed out.

In all honesty, it had been a nightmare to convince Stoic the Vast that she was trustworthy, and strong enough to go on this mission. But she was a Durin and the people of her line did not sit by idly when there was a fight to be fought for the greater good. So she strengthened her resolve. If she wanted to return to her family, this was her first stepping stone, because she would not leave until she had helped the people who helped her. After Hiccup and the others were free, her and Frerin were off in search of the other Ereborians, and then she'd be having a serious talk with her 'adad. In Lydia's...**_humble_**...opinion, it was high time they returned to Middle Earth and reclaimed the Lonely Mountain.

With her resolve firm and her face grim, after the Berk boats touched the shores of Outcast Island, she was the first to leap out, not even making a single sound as she landed in the shallow water. With a mighty down stroke, Frerin lifted himself into the air enough to soar over the helm of the boat to land on the ground near her. Lydia said nothing as she slid onto the dragon's back and it started to waddle inland stealthily like a snake, Fishlegs and his dragon Meatlug walking behind. Lydia knew it was her job to lead Fishlegs right to the cells so they could break the other dragon riders free while the Vikings dealt with Alvin and his Outcasts. The two dragons were just there as extra protection should they encounter any guards.

They crouched in the shadows, until they heard the distinct sound of fighting as battle calls rang into the night, and Lydia felt a twinge of longing for her own family, her fellow Ereborian warriors. However, she shook her melancholy off as she slipped off Frerin's back and hissed in Khuzdul, _"Stay here. Guard silently._" The Scauldron gave her a reproachful look, as though he thought she was foolish for telling him something so obvious, but she just shrugged and slipped into the tunnels that led to the Outcast dungeons, with Fishlegs close behind after giving his own dragon similar instructions.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"Thorin! There are other boats here! It sounds like they're fighting the island's inhabitants!" Nori reported as he slipped back aboard the ship, his cloak wrapped around him to practically hide him from even their sights. Ori was fretting in a rather worried fashion that was eerily similar to Dori, obviously terrified he was going to lose his other brother as well, and a murmur spread through his subjects. However, the King in Exile knew they could use this to their

advantage.

"Whatever the reason they're fighting, it can work in our favor. Dwalin, Bifur, Bofur, and Nori, I want you all to go free Dori. The rest of us will deal with the enemy." The four nodded in agreement, and then Bilba spoke up rather quietly,

"And please, keep an eye out for Lydia." Tharin nodded in somber agreement with his wife. Dwalin grimaced at the pained expression on her face, Bifur gave a respectful nod to show he'd understood what she said, Nori said nothing and simply turned away, retreating back into the night after waving Ori off, and the other two followed, Bofur following last and offering Bilba a reassuring smile, then she shouldered her mattock and followed her cousin, the thief, and the warrior.

Nori was exceptionally sneaky, being a thief, and he had no trouble sneaking his three companions in. Bofur didn't even marvel at said skill anymore. Nori thought rather highly of himself, as evidence by his star-like hair and constant preening, but he was a damn good thief, she'd give him that. The dark passage he led them down was narrow to begin with, and wove deeply underground, widening just enough for them to slip through it. When they exited the passage and stepped into a dimly lit cavern, Bofur honestly never would have seen the crevice they'd just come out of as an actual path if Nori hadn't of led them through it.

_ "Wait," _Bofur hissed, grabbing at Nori and Dwalin's shoulders as they tried to continue further in. The paused and looked at her, Dwalin puzzled and Nori annoyed. Best friend or not, he didn't appreciate when anyone told him how to sneak about. _"There's a guard, you idiots." _Then she turned to Bifur and in Iglishmâk told him to take down the guard, **quietly.**

Bifur blinked once, twice, and then nodded in comprehension, edging around them, and then in a move he'd perfected in his youth, he'd yanked out one of his small throwing axes and chucked it as hard as he could, hitting the burly guard smack in the forehead and knocking him off his feet.

Bofur let out a slight chuckle as she moved out of the shadows and stepped over the large guard. The irony of this man's head wound was not lost on her, but the poor fellow had never seen it coming. If she had to guess, he was put on guard at this point because he was incompetent but strong. This worked to their advantage. If he had been competent, he would have heard the axe whistle through the air and have had the sense to dodge. The fool was better off dead as he was now. Bifur, Dwalin, and Nori followed her lead, not a care in the world as they stepped over the corpse. Nori was still scowling and Dwalin was grim-faced.

_ "I'll head around the other way. You lot come from the front. If there are other guards than the ones we saw before, they would be the smart ones, and you all will need to cause a distraction," _Nori commanded, and Bofur didn't argue because Nori needed this sense of purpose. She knew her friend well enough to know he was still upset he'd lost his brother, and she was more than happy to let him take the lead. However, that didn't mean she wouldn't add her own ideas to the plan without telling Nori of them. It was always funny to see him get irritated, and it didn't happen often enough, unless of course

you put him and Dori in a room together for more than fifteen minutes.

The thief disappeared around another side tunnel that no one had noticed before then, and Bofur smirked at her friend's predictability before she led the way further underground. It broke her heart to travel underground though, and knowing it was not Erebor's dark tunnels she wandered. Bofur paused when she heard voices, and asked in Iglishmâk if the other two heard it. Dwalin and Bifur confirmed that they did, and then Bifur drew one of his small axes, intent on chucking them into the fray, and that was all good and well, until Bofur heard the princess's voice. Frantically she sighed to Bifur to put the axe down as she peered around the final corner.

"Mahal damn it all!" she swore as she quickly pulled herself back, leaning against the wall. There were seven men in the room, all of them larger than her, Bifur, and Nori, and, what really made her blood boil, was that there were a bunch of kids in cages! While she did not recognize the six teens in the one cage, she recognized Dori and Lydia in a second cage...and Dori didn't look so good. She was no field medic, but it sure looked like he might've been poisoned. One said something in Norse and the others burst into laughter, jeering at Dori and Lydia. Norse was not her best but...

She thought about it. Whoever the leader was seemed to favor brawn over brains, and men with simple brains...

Oh, Nori was going to be pissed with her since this was NOT part of his plan.

Without consulting Dwalin, she threw off one of her coats and handed it to Bifur, before placing a seductive smile on her face and sauntering down the hall, ignoring Dwalin's angry hiss and Bifur's puzzled grunt.

She leaned on her mattock and called out in Norse, "Oh boys~. I seem to be quite lost. Care to point a girl in the right direction?" All of their eyes went wide, and they froze for a moment, unable to comprehend what was right in front of them, and Bofur just kept smiling. She was pretty, and she had to act like she believed it while they were trying to put the pieces of the puzzle together.

Finally one of them stepped toward her, and a sick grin had spread across his face. As a couple of his friends followed with sickening intent in their steps, Bofur inwardly flinched. Perhaps she had overestimated their stupidity, but she would not back down. The leader only had to take four more steps...Three...Two...One. As soon as he was in range, with surprising grace and speed, she swung her mattock up into his skull, knocking him over flat on his back.

His two friends blinked in shock and paused in their approach. However, as the other guards moved forward, one passed too close to Lydia, and the princess of Erebor grabbed fistfuls of his hair and smashed his head repeatedly into the bars of her cell until his blood had spilled over the floor and he collapsed as nothing more than a corpse.

Dwalin and Bifur burst forth from their hiding place in the hall behind Bofur, roaring with rage and slamming into the remaining

guards with all the force of a hurricane. With a smirk, Bofur leapt into the battle as well, swinging her mattock and humming a merry tune all the while. The men were not very experienced, which was a shame because they were slaughtered. The lead guard though, was bigger and stronger than the others, and knocked her off her feet when he snuck up behind her.

She heard Dwalin roar as she glanced up at the man towering over her. It was like some kind of twisted accompaniment to what she was certain was her death as he sneered down at her. However, he turned when he felt a tap on his shoulder. Nori was right behind him, and as soon as they were face to face, the thief's fist connected with his face, and the man fell, clutching his nose which was surely broken now. Nori shook out his hand as he glared down at the man writhing in pain as he snarled, "That was for my brother." Then he stepped away and over to the cage holding Lydia and Dori.

Nori gave Lydia a teasing bow before he reached up to his hair and withdrew one of his lock-picks. Moments later the door to the cage sprung open and Lydia rushed out, snatching the lock-pick from Nori and going to the other cage while the middle brother of Ri retrieved his older brother, who was still out cold.

"We gotta get Dori to Oin. He mighta been poisoned," Bofur said as she stood, adjusting her hat on her head.

"We got bigger problems, Bofur. Before they through me in a cage I saw their leader snatch a paper from Dori. I hope to Mahal I'm wrong, but I'm probably not," Lydia said as she held the cage door open while Bifur and Dwalin threw the guards in.

Bofur felt faint as the implications of what the leader of these ruffians could have taken finally sunk in, and she asked quietly, "You think...?"

"Highly likely."

"Are you guys talking about the map that Alvin took from him? He really wanted it. What makes it so important that your friend there would rather die than give it up?" the skinny red-head asked, nodding at Dori, still out cold in his brother's arms and breathing shallowly, his weakness speaking volumes of his condition.

All the Ereborians froze at that. There was only one map that any of them would ever carry on their persons. It was a hope and a promise and a dream all at once. Should they all ever get separated, they would return to the map's destination. It was a map that would lead them across countless seas, past the rolling hills of the Shire, over the Misty Mountains, and through the Greenwood. It was a map that would lead them home...to Erebor. As one, they all roared in their secret language,

"Mahal damn it all!"

* * *

><p>I just had to end this chapter like that. It amused me.</p>

Anyway what did you think of the longest chapter?

Review please!

7. Chapter 7

Hello everybody! Here's chapter seven, so soon after chapter six went up...I have no social life.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 7

Thorin Oakenshield, King in Exile, plowed through the masses. Blinded by battle fury, he slashed at anyone who got in his way. He would not let any of them see Nori and his team. He would not risk this rescue mission. They looked after their own, and Dori should never had been captured in the first place. Nori was going to be in a world of trouble when this was over. He'd specifically ordered that no one leave the ship until they had decided on a plan.

Nearby, his small wife fought valiantly, roaring her own battle cry and nimbly darting around her enemies before darting in to deal fatal blows. Her honey colored curls were tangled and matted with slowly drying blood and the expression on her face was one of fierce determination. Mahal, he loved her. She was loyal and headstrong, clever and quick, and caring. He'd never met anyone like her before, which was why as he had been passing through her home in the Shire, he was immediately fascinated, so he ended up staying for another few months, and then finally decided he would not return to Erebor without her. It took time, but he wore her down until she agreed to come to Erebor with him and marry him.

However, she had not been prepared in the slightest when Frerin had informed her quite bluntly that she was going to be queen whenever their father, Thrain, stepped down. Needless to say she had been furious he hadn't mentioned to her that he was a prince. In his defense, he simply hadn't wanted that fact to influence her choice. They needn't have worried, in the end. Their love was strong, Bilba had made a great queen, and they'd had two children which was cause

for the whole kingdom to celebrate. If only Smaug the Terrible had not come to Erebor...

"Thorin! Pay attention to the fight!" Balin snapped as he sliced an arm off a man who'd been about to attack Thorin. The King in Exile shook off his thoughts and leapt back into the fray, even as he caught sight of Nori, Dwalin, Bifur, and Bofur, with Nori carrying Dori and making a bee-line for the ship, where he knew Oin and Ori waited. Even as he watched, a bunch of teens filed out after them. Six he didn't recognize, but the seventh was...

"Lydia!" Frodo's cry carried over the turmoil, and then the dark-haired prince was fighting his way to his sister's side, normally so reserved, even when he fought, but now a light of insane relief glimmered in his eyes and he savagely cut down anyone who got in his way.

Fili and Kili took up Frodo's cry of joy, and soon the news had spread to every Ereborian scattered about the battlefield, each of them pausing to crane their necks and get a glimpse of the princess. Thorin glanced around for Bilba, and became frantic when she wasn't right where he last saw her. He was terribly afraid she was going to do something stupid just to get to their daughter. Whenever her emotions got the better of her during fights, her movements would get too erratic and she would start trembling, leaving her vulnerable. He breathed a sigh of relief when he finally caught side of her, Bofur covering her as she fought her way to Lydia. Thorin knew he could count on the cheery toy maker to watch out for Bilba.

"Erebrians! Fall back!" Thorin finally roared, his voice easily carrying over the battlefield to reach everyone, causing them to pause in either confusion or disappointment. It wasn't often their King called for a retreat. However, he sensed the tide was about to turn against them, and he would not risk his people while Dori was down for the count, Lydia seemed exhausted, and Bilba would soon dissolve into an emotional wreck.

The allies whom they didn't even know were left floundering as the Erebrians pulled back, heading for their ship before they would set out to sea. However, a cry of outrage, or maybe pain, caused the younger Erebrians to pause, and with a battle cry, Lydia was charging at a man who held a small red-headed boy by the neck. Frodo, Fili, and Kili took up the battle roar and charged after her while Thorin watched on in horror and Bilba screamed, only just being stopped from charging after them because Thorin had managed to drag her back. Thorin was sure he was about to see his two children and sister-sons torn limb from limb, but a screaming Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur charged forward to save the royal heirs.

In a matter of moments, Lydia and Fili, the fastest two, had reached the giant of a man and were on him, hacking at his arms brutally, Lydia with an axe and Fili with his sword, until the smaller boy was released, snatched up by the Erebrian teens, and then carted off the battlefield, back towards the ship, while Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur covered their escape. Hands reached down and hauled them all aboard, even Bombur, with difficulty, and even as their ship was swarmed, they fought back while Nori and Dwalin hoisted the anchor and Gloin steered them out to sea.

"What were you thinking?!"

"I couldn't leave him to die!"

"Now we hafta take him home..."

"Those look like some nasty marks on his neck..." Okay, that harsh sentence, whatever it was, did not sound good.

"He's perfectly fine. Ah don't understand why he's not awake..."

"I'm hungry. Uncle Oin, tell Bombur to make dinner!"

"I'm fine; stop worrying."

"I think the lad is waking up!" A hush fell over the room he was in as his eyes slowly pried open and he stared up at all the faces hovering over him. Many of them were bearded, but there were a few clean-shaven, and one that was familiar to him.

"How do you feel, Hiccup?" Lydia asked quietly as she helped him sit up, and he held his head as he took in the room full of strangers. Many of them glared at him, some wore guarded looks, and there were even a few friendly faces. A boy with bright red hair, even brighter than his own, with the very wisps of a beard beginning on his chin, bounded forward to get in his space.

"Who are you? I'm Gimli! You're my friend now, got it?" Gimli said, shoving his finger in Hiccup's face, and he went cross-eyed trying to look at it.

"Gimli, why don't you and I go whip up some dinner for everyone? Let the big people talk," a large man with orangish hair and beard said as he stepped forward. He was round and large, and his face was red, as though he was eternally out of breath.

Gimli's face lit up and he chirped, "Okay Bombur!" then he skipped out ahead of the waddling man. Then Lydia was back in his sight and he'd never been so grateful to see anyone in his life.

"Hiccup, do you remember what happened?" she asked carefully. When he shook his head, she continued, "Alvin was strangling you. My cousins and brother, Fili, Kili, and Frodo, helped me free you. We couldn't kill him, but we all got away with our lives, which was the goal. We're going to take you back to Berk now, okay?" Hiccup nodded mutely, and then glanced around the room fully as he felt a little better and could turn his head without feeling like he would throw up. His eyes fell on the form of the other man who'd been in the cage across the hall from him.

Lydia followed his gaze and said quietly, "That's Dori. He was poisoned, but he's getting better. Nori and Ori are taking care of him, now that Oin has given him an antidote. You feel up to a little food? I promise you'll love it, meat or veggies. Bombur and Bofur are great cooks."

Finally, Hiccup managed to speak. His words came out as a hoarse whisper, but he was proud of himself for managing to speak

nonetheless, "Food sounds great. Can I have some water first, though?" Lydia smiled and nodded, before standing swiftly and sweeping out of the room, everyone else standing there parting like a wave to let her pass them. They clearly held great respect for her.

Then the intimidating man with dark hair just like Lydia's, and her distinct features, was hovering over him, and Hiccup glanced up at him. He hesitated, and then said in rough Norse, "I would like to thank you...for helping my daughter. When we return you to your home, I would also like to thank your King. If he had not brought my daughter to that battle on that cursed island, we never would have gotten Lydia back."

Hiccup replied, "I think I should be the one thanking your daughter, not the other way around. And Berk doesn't have a King; we have a chief, who just so happens to be my dad. He'll probably want to thank Lydia..."

The man gave a thoughtful hum and pulled back, his pale eyes, also strikingly similar to Lydia's, were lost in thought, and the woman next to him with honey hair pulled him out of the room. The towering mountain with the large, tangled beard, bald hair, and strange tattoos followed them like a shadow...or a bodyguard. Slowly others filtered out after them, until only a few were left. One was the unconscious Dori, another was a man with hair that reminded him of a star who was dutifully tending to Dori, there was a much younger male curled up in a chair fast asleep while clutching Dori's hand, two men older than him who just sat there grinning at Hiccup creepily...yeah, not going there..., an elderly man with graying hair who must have been the healer since he was putting away some tools, and finally another young man curled up in the only other chair reading a book with a strange title in a strange language he couldn't read. The reading person was also strikingly similar to Lydia. They could have been twins, they looked so similar.

Finally he pulled his gaze away from the boy who was reading, carefully avoided looking at the two boys who were still grinning at him, and finally let his gaze rest on the man with the star-shaped hair tending to Dori. His movements were slow, uncertain, but his face was determined. Finally, he spoke, "You know it rude to stare?" Hiccup jumped guiltily, and immediately regretted the action. The elder man turned fierce hazel eyes on the Viking teen, and Hiccup squirmed under the scrutiny. "You're hardly much of a man. Can't begin to imagine why you were in that dungeon in the first place," he said dismissively, and then turned back to Dori.

Ouch. That kind of hurt. "Don't mind Nori. He's just grumpy because he accidentally got his big brother into trouble. He'll be nicer once Dori's feeling better." Hiccup glanced back to the boy sitting in the chair as he gently closed his book and looked at him with that pale gaze. "I'm Frodo, Lydia's brother. The blond is my cousin Fili, and his brother Kili is the dark-haired one. Grumpy is Nori, and the one passed out in the chair is his younger brother, Ori." Hiccup blinked when Frodo fell silent, and then realized he was expecting a response.

"Hiccup." Frodo just nodded and studied him closely, though his gaze was kind where Nori's had not been. It still made him uncomfortable to be stared at like that, though.

"You're very strange," Frodo decided, nodding to himself, before he stood and vacated the room. Fili and Kili shared identical grins before following their cousin, just as Lydia breezed back into the room, carrying a chipped cup full of water and a plate with steaming hot food that smelled delicious and made the Viking's mouth water. She plopped the plate down on the cot next to him before straightening and looking him in the eye, her gaze almost reproachful.

"Hurry up and eat that because Berk is in sight. Oin says you're well enough to walk so if you're not up to it or that food hasn't been finished, you won't like it because Dwalin will drag you off this ship if he has to." Gone was the kind girl who had helped him when he first woke up, and in her place was the girl who was used to giving orders and having them followed. It was the same girl he'd come to learn a little of when they were imprisoned together in the dungeons.

Nori snorted at something Lydia had said, and she turned her harsh glare to him as she barked something at him in their strange language. His face flushed red and he turned back to tending his older brother without so much as a grumble.

Interesting.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"Thank you, very much! If there's anything I can ever do, anything at all, to return the favor, don't hesitate to ask, and my people and I will be more than willing to help you," Stoic the Vast said, shaking hands with Thorin. The King in Exile opened his mouth to brush it off as nothing, but Lydia chose that moment to speak up,

_ " 'Adad. We need to talk.' _

Thorin paused and turned to give his daughter a level look. Lydia's face was grim and her eyes serious. That alone told Thorin that she would not let it go and this discussion could not be put off. So he turned to Stoic and asked if there was somewhere he could have a discussion with Lydia for a moment. Stoic readily agreed, and led them away.

Dwalin watched as the Princess and King disappeared around a bend, and then shared a look with Bofur, who stood beside him. Her eyes were full of worry, and he gave her a grim smile of acceptance, for they both knew what Lydia would be discussing with her 'adad.

The Map Dori had once held, and Erebor.

* * *

><p>I'm on a roll! Gah, the end is so crappy though! I had everything beautiful and typed and it was great, and then it didn't save. I burst into TEARS I was so upset! Which is why you get...this. For some reason, though, these chapters just keep getting longer and longer. Ah, well.</p>

How was it?

Review please!

8. Chapter 8

Hello all! So, this is my super-powerful emotional chapter! I've been thinking hard about the plot in this story's future, and as of yet, it's looking like a MINIMUM fifteen chapters. Wish me luck with that...

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 8

"The meeting of The Company of Thorin Oakenshield come to order," Balin stated, and then withdrew a gavel and hit it upon the table a few times. Everyone took a seat around the large rectangular table in the Viking's main hall. Thorin sat at one end, Bilba sat at the other. Dwalin sat next to Thorin, Balin on Thorin's other side, Bofur next to Balin, Nori next to Bofur, then Dori who looked far too weak to be up, Ori, Frodo, back to Bilba, then on Bilba's other side was Lydia, Fili and Kili, Gloin, Oin, Bifur, Bombur, then back to Dwalin. No Vikings were present, and Stoic had assured them that no one would intrude, which was why they felt safe enough to use Norse and Westron, for now.

It had been a few days since their arrival on the Isle of Berk, and they had waited a full two days for Dori to wake up. It was another full day before Oin said Dori could get up to attend the meeting. While it had been a good chance for Ori to learn the culture and document it, and the rest of them had brushed up on their Norse, made a few friends, and had been well-fed, Lydia was itching to go. It was with no small amount of relief that she had taken her seat next to her Mam for the meeting.

"We are here to discuss the events of these past two weeks. It has been proven that, while our pirate ship is relatively safe, it is not ideal, especially with young Gimli still aboard. He could be washed out to sea the way Lydia was and never be found. That aside, these Outcasts are now a serious threat. It has already been proved they are ruthless and have the means to hold even the strongest of us,"

Thorin began with a nod to Dori. Dori did not acknowledge that the King was even talking about him, dutifully staring at his hands as though ashamed he had been captured, even though no one blamed him for a simple mistake (that was quite honestly to be pinned on Nori).

"What's worse, he now has a map. To Erebor. While normally this is no cause for alarm as Smaug would destroy them, there is evidence that they will be able to 'train' Smaug. Or at least, make a sort of deal." This caused a murmur to travel through the group, everyone distressed by this news. With Smaug on their side, they would be able to devastate the land and seize control of everything, not to mention their mountains of gold buried deep within Erebor. Thorin held up his hand and everyone fell silent.

Not for very long, though. "What are ye suggesting, Thorin?" Oin finally asked, breaking the silence. His brother nodded alongside him, eager to hear the answer. The King in Exile glanced at the faces of all his friends and subjects, their eyes alight with curiosity, and he took a deep breath before replying,

"I suggest we return to reclaim Erebor and kill Smaug before the Outcasts even get there." A roar went up throughout the room, and soon all the Ereborians were shouting at Thorin, a few in disagreement, while others were eagerly agreeing and demanding to know why they hadn't left already. Dwalin bellowed for silence, to no avail. Finally, Lydia stood up.

"Enough! Mahal damn it, one at a time!" she shrieked over their caterwauling. The other Ereborians gradually fell to a dull murmur, and then Lydia continued, "I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm tired of living on the ocean, always moving, not belonging anywhere! I want to go home, and no blasted dragon is going to stand in my way!"

"Lydia's right..." Bifur managed to say, but then fell silent again, trailing off as his mind wandered. Lydia nodded in appreciation of his support, but she needn't have bothered. Even though he was trying so hard, he just couldn't concentrate very well, especially when he was required to sit down and think of one certain topic for an extended period of time. Bombur took up his cousin's thought.

"What Bif' is getting at is that we need to head home, because it's our home, and we're not gonna let anyone keep it. Besides, what have we got to lose? If these people somehow can work with Smaug all our lives are forfeit...That is, if Smaug is still alive in there," he added at the end after thinking for a moment.

"You can bet that beast is still alive in there. Dragons live for centuries, Bombur, and we all know how they hoard their gold. Surely a dragon would die before it abandoned its gold. So we could sit and wait, but if we did, it is very likely no human would return to Erebor for many centuries. If only we hadn't stocked up so much," Frodo said quietly with a small frown and a shake of his head.

"Assume for a moment we all do go on this venture, madness that it is. The entrance to the mountain is sealed. We cannot get in, nor can our enemy," Balin said. He was always the voice of reason, and many

of the Ereborians were nodding in agreement with him because he spoke the truth. Since the entrance was blocked surely they could afford to let these Outcasts go there, since they would be unable to get to the dragon and the gold. That way, they could also let Smaug rot in there before they went in to reclaim it as their own.

"Alvin the Treacherous has a breed of dragon called the Whispering Death! They are known for tunneling underground! He could just have those tunnel the lot of them into the heart of our mountain!" Lydia exploded. Hiccup had told her that Alvin had that particular breed under his thumb, and Fishlegs had given her the information on them. It was very alarming.

"That, and I wouldn't say we are entirely locked out of the mountain," Bofur spoke up for the first time, rather hesitantly at that. Then, she pulled her hat from her head and withdrew a small paper from an inside pocket on the hat. Carefully, she unfolded said paper and spread it out gently on the table in front of herself. Everyone peered to get a look at the map, except Lydia; she had seen it before. It was a close-up map of the Lonely Mountain. The map was dotted with trees and Khuzdul runes in Bofur's shaky hand. At the base of the mountain was a crude drawing of a door, a key, and a big question mark.

"When I brought Lydia out of the mountain eleven years ago, the main entrance had already collapsed. So, despite how suicidal it seemed, I backtracked into the mountain, avoiding Smaug, mind you, and when I came across this one tunnel that sloped up, I figured I might as well follow it. Well, it led to a door at the end which I pushed open, and behold, daylight! I left the door open, and we spent a night in that area. Instead of sleeping, I mapped it all. When I closed the door and we started to leave, I realized I'd dropped one of my knives. I tried to get back in, but that was when I realized that, while you could leave, you couldn't enter without a key...I...don't have the key," Bofur admitted softly, and her hand came up to twirl one of her braids between her fingers as she avoided making eye contact with anyone else.

"I think I do," Thorin said, and then from one of his many side pockets, produced a key as he said, "It's been in the family for generations. Never could figure out what it was for," he admitted wryly as he held the iron key up for everyone to see.

"We can get in," Kili marveled, and he and Fili grinned. Their eyes were shining with the prospect of adventure, revenge, and the return to Erebor.

Balin cleared his throat, "In light of these new revelations, and after weighing all the pros and cons, we will now take a vote. All in favor of returning to Erebor?" Lydia, Bofur, Fili, Kili, Bombur, Bifur, Thorin, Dori, Nori, Ori, and Frodo all raised their hands. Balin nodded as he counted and then gestured for them to put their hands down. "All opposed?" Everyone else- Dwalin, Balin, Oin, Gloin, and surprisingly Bilbo- raised their hands. The last five were clearly outvoted, and Balin conceded, "Very well. Erebor it is." There was a smattering of cheers at his statement, mainly from Fili and Kili, and just as everyone began to rise from their seats to leave Thorin, Balin, and Dwalin to discuss strategies, Lydia ordered them back to their seats.

"The Company of Thorin Oakenshield will now discuss the matter of The Vikings." Thorin nodded to his daughter to continue since he apparently approved, so she went on, "The Vikings have already offered to help in whatever way possible. I propose we take some of them with us to Erebor to take care of The Outcasts and Smaug." Dead silence fell, as though no one could believe she had just said that. All that could be heard was Dori's unsteady breathing. None of the others seemed to take a breath or make a move. All were looking at Thorin, as though expecting him to shoot the idea down immediately. He made no move to do so.

"Elaborate," Balin commanded, and many others nodded in agreement.

Lydia took a deep breath and continued, "Hiccup and his friends train dragons. That's the reason Alvin had him and his friends locked up. He wanted to know how it was possible. Now he knows, and he's going after Smaug. They all feel guilty, and want to help. Stoic the Vast already offered a few war troops, as well. We would be fools not to take advantage of the extra strength in our numbers."

"How do we know we can trust them?" Dwalin demanded, voicing the question that was on everyone's minds. If they had so much power over these dragons, couldn't they turn on the Ereborians as soon as they had defeated Alvin and take their gold from them?

"I can vouch for them," Dori spoke up quietly, and all turned to look at him. He met everyone's gaze unflinchingly. "I was locked up with them. They showed nothing but kindness towards me. They tried to help me, tried to prevent them from poisoning me...they are good people, if a little strange."

Bilba seemed to be in agreement, "Can we not give them the benefit of the doubt? I stand with Dori and Lydia on this."

All hell broke loose.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"What do you think they're talking about in there?" Astrid wondered aloud. She stood outside the doors to the Great Hall with the other dragon trainers. They were waiting for the Ereborians to finish the meeting so everyone could go inside and eat. All other Vikings had grown bored and wandered off. Only the dragon trainers remained, still optimistic the Ereborians would be done soon, despite the small amount of roaring they had heard before.

"If you really wanna know, follow us," Ruffnut said, and then her and Tuffnut disappeared around the side of the building. With a shrug, the rest followed, and watched in awe as Ruff and Tuff scrambled up the sides of the building, gripping spikes that jutted out that none of them had noticed before. Astrid and Snotlout followed. Fishlegs downright refused, but Hiccup was going to follow, but Fishlegs grabbed his arm and hissed,

"I talked to their little scribe, Ori. He wrote a book about this lot; it's kind of his job. All evidence in that book suggests we can't trust them and therefore this is a very bad idea because if they catch us eavesdropping..."

"Relax, Fishlegs. You're being paranoid," Hiccup replied, and then with great difficulty, he followed the twins, Snotlout, and Astrid. At the roof, there was a hole they all slid into where they could perch on the rafters unnoticed. They got there just as the room exploded into sound. It was impossible to know who said what.

"Great now it's assured-"

"I cannot hear yeh, laddie! Speak up!"

"This is your fault in the first place, you've no opinion-!"

"You can't talk to Dori like that! Only I can! I'll rip your beard out!"

Incoherent babble from Bifur.

"I've got rights-"

"It's insane, you're insane!"

"Say that to my face, piece of shit!"

"Can't we all just be civil?"

"Dwalin, sit down!"

"Fili, Kili, I swear to Mahal, if you don't take that back-"

"I believe sweet little Ori is looking for a fight, don't-?"

"I completely agree, Kili. Let's teach-"

"Now see here! I may be recovering but I'm still-!"

Through it all, Frodo was reading, Bombur was eating and looking confused, his only interjection having been the first sentence, and Thorin looked ready to blow his top. Fili and Kili had leapt on top of the table, ready to fight little Ori, Nori was ready to fly at Oin and Gloin, Bifur was in a heated argument with Dwalin, who was on his feet, screaming at Bifur and Bofur both, Bilba and Balin were both trying to keep the peace, Dori was trying to sit Ori back down, and Lydia was nearly incoherent with rage. Finally, Thorin had had enough.

"AtkÃ¢t!" With his roar, the Ereborians were immediately back in their seats, their expressions sheepish as Thorin went on the lecture them in that strange, growl-like language from before. It was a long speech, and slowly but surely, the others relaxed from their battle-ready positions and nodded along in agreement.

Finally, the old advisor, Balin, cleared his throat and said in Norse, "All in favor of asking for the Viking's assistance?" Lydia, Bilba, Dori, Nori, Ori, Bofur, and Frodo all raised their hands, though hesitantly on Bofur's part. Balin nodded for them to put their hands down and asked, "All opposed?" Oin, Gloin, Fili, Dwalin, Balin, Bombur, and Kili all raised their hands. Balin frowned and gestured for them to put their hands down and looked to the two who had not voted. Bifur was staring off into the distance and very likely hadn't even heard the question. Thorin's gaze was narrowed, and he looked

like he had no intention of voting. Bombur gently nudged his cousin and explained the question to him patiently. Bifur blinked a few times, and then signed something to Balin that had him nodding in defeat. Finally, he turned to Thorin.

"What'll it be, laddie?" Thorin paused, and then stood, looking at each and every person before he spoke.

"You are all my friends, my family. I could not have asked for a group of better men...and women. Your loyalty is worth more to me than all the gold in Erebor. However, that gold, is rightfully yours, too. We will go to Erebor...and we will ask the Vikings to accompany us."

The Viking teens pulled back, shock on all their faces. However, they dared not speak, for fear of being discovered. They sat there for a few minutes, listening for more talking. When none came, they dared to peek over the rafters again. All the Ereborians had spread out around the room. Thorin was at the fireplace, smoking his pipe. Dwalin and Bofur still sat at the table, glaring across it at each other. Frodo and Bilba stood near Thorin, Bilba clinging to her son and watching as Lydia paced like a caged dragon. Dori was leaning against a wall, while Nori and Ori hovered nearby worriedly. Balin, Fili and Kili also stood near Thorin. Bifur stood alone, smoking, Bombur had brought forth food from one of his pockets as he drifted around the room and ate. Oin and Gloin stood together, watching everyone else warily.

Slowly, a low humming filled the room, rising in volume, until Thorin started to sing. His voice was deep and beautiful, but it was in that language none of them could understand. He sang a verse as his wife and son stepped into his space beside him and joined in on the second verse. Lydia froze in her pacing, watching everyone warily. Dwalin and Bofur's glares softened as they both joined in on a third verse. Fili and Kili joined in the fourth, and then it was just Thorin, Frodo, Fili, and Kili singing the fifth verse for a moment. When the sixth came along, everyone joined in, their voices blending in perfectly together. The song grew in volume as their voices carried into the seventh and eighth verses, reaching the loudest point, but it still remained slow and mournful. They knew enough to know that the song was weaving a beautiful story from their shared past. Though they could not understand the words, the song sent shivers down their spines. There was so much power behind the song that it moved them. The Ereborians felt very strongly about what they were singing.

Finally, all the others fell silent, and then Lydia's voice carried over it all on the ninth and final verse, clear and pure, and when the last word left her mouth, they remained silent as the song rang through the grand room. The Viking teens knew this was a private moment of sorrow and remembrance, and they should not have listened in on it. In silent agreement, they all slid quietly out the rafters, sliding down the roof and onto the ground, moving off towards the Dragon Training Academy to discuss what they'd heard.

* * *

><p>This was the chapter I've been building towards. I loved writing this one, with all the power and plot it had...I'm VERY proud of it. Obviously, I can't put the lyrics in here it's against the FF

guidelines. Shame. I was singing the nine verses I picked from the original even as I wrote this. PM me if you wanna know the verses I used.<p>

(Geez, longer chapters every time! This is turning into a monster-sized fic.)

Review please.

9. Chapter 9

Hello everybody! Here's an update! Sorry it was so long coming: finals are coming up WAY too fast and I'm freaking out! I just want everyone out there to know I have not forgotten or given up on ANY of my babies...er, stories...yeah. Hang with me, okay?

**koryandrs- **Thanks so much for telling me about those forums! I will definitely check those out when my schedule gets back under my control.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United<p>

Chapter 9

Another day had passed, and the Vikings had all silently agreed to say nothing of what they had heard for fear of angering the Ereborians. They needn't have worried. As soon as the meeting had been over, Thorin had gone straight to Stoic the Vast with Balin at his side. They had immediately begun discussions and negotiations, and had barely stopped, only to eat had they truly stopped talking.

Astrid sighed as she wandered near the cliffs, but paused when she heard a soft melody floating on the breeze. Curious, she wandered forward and gasped when she saw Bofur perched at the edge of the cliffs, uncaring that, yes, she could fall off, even as she played her flute, her eyes closed as the music poured into the air. Finally the song she was playing came to an end and she turned to Astrid with a smile.

"Come sit here. I won't bite," she teased, patting the spot beside her, and Astrid nervously slunk over and sat, careful not to be too near the edge. Just because Bofur was so confident they wouldn't fall, Astrid wasn't going to take any chances. It could get pretty windy on the cliffs, after all.

"How'd you even know I was there?" Astrid finally asked after they'd sat in silence for a few moments. She brushed her hair out of her face as she glanced at the hatted Ereborian.

Bofur chuckled and said, "It ain't hard, lass. Ye can sneak all ye like, but if yer not aware of the direction of the sun, your shadow will give you away every time." Astrid glanced around, and saw that the sun was indeed setting, casting her shadow over the land and water in front of her. Still...

"You had your eyes closed."

Bofur let out a heart-felt laugh as she replied, "Yeah, for a little while." Suddenly Astrid understood. Bofur had seen her shadow, recognized her by that, and deemed it safe enough to pretend that she was unaware of the Viking teen's presence.

"Where'd you learn that?" Astrid asked.

Bofur didn't answer the question right away, twirling the flute around before tucking it into her sleeve. "Do you know the man with the star-shaped hair? You've seen him around?" At Astrid's puzzled nod, she went on, "Ah, that there is our resident thief. His name is Nori, the middle brother of Ri. Seven years at sea with someone like him? You pick up a few things." Then she smirked. "Of course, no one can beat the master thief. I didn't know you and yer friends were in the rafters spying on us until he told me."

Astrid's face flushed red in embarrassment. She hadn't realized that they'd been noticed. Bofur laughed again and rolled backwards, away from the edge, and popped to her feet. "Nothing to be embarrassed about. No one is mad, and there's not much that escapes Nori's notice."

Astrid stood up as well and wandered with Bofur as the Ereborian woman began walking. "Can I ask you something?" At Bofur's nod, Astrid continued, "You're one of the few women among the other Ereborians. Do they ever...underestimate you? Or try to...treat you like you're weak?"

Bofur's normally cheerful expression turned somber as she considered the serious question. "Aye. It happens. Whenever it does, though, I ignore who says it and then don't talk to them for weeks. I went a month without talking to my brother once." Astrid raised an eyebrow at that but chose not to ask for the story. Bofur paused at the edge of the trees right outside the village, and Astrid followed her gaze. Lydia was facing off with the tall, blond-headed boy who kind of looked like a lion. The Princess of Erebor was twirling a fancy axe that was decidedly not of Viking make. Dwalin and Nori, were watching carefully as the two started circling each other.

"Seems Lydia and Fili are about to have a sparring match," Bofur observed, smiling to herself. Lydia's face was twisted into a snarl as she glared at Fili, and the handsome Ereborian had as fierce an

expression as he could muster as well. Nori and Dwalin stood nearby as well, Dwalin barking orders at the both of them while Nori just had a smirk on his face. "Ohh, skill swap," Bofur observed. Before Astrid could ask what she meant, the two Ereborians leapt at each other, Lydia barreling into Fili and knocking him to the ground.

In one smooth motion, Fili twisted out from underneath his cousin and leapt to his feet, hands hanging limply at his sides. However, he looked very uncomfortable, as though he wanted to just tackle his cousin and wrestle with her. As Astrid and Bofur wandered closer, Nori's smirk became a scowl and he called out to Fili, "None of those tactics Dwalin taught you, hear me Fili? This is a practice for the two of you to work outside your normal fighting style!"

"What's going on?" Astrid asked Bofur.

"Hm? Oh! Well, Lydia is Nori's star pupil. She fights like the thief. Could become one if she wanted. Needless to say, Thorin's not too impressed by that. Fili is Dwalin's star pupil. He's a warrior through and through. Everything Dwalin throws at him, Fili tackles and masters. Every so often, their teachers make them switch it up. Lydia can't always fight the way Nori taught her, and if Fili tries to fight like Dwalin all the time he's going to get seriously hurt," Bofur explained as they watched Lydia repeatedly lunge for Fili and Fili dodge clumsily.

Suddenly, it seemed Lydia had had enough, because her style subtly shifted, and as she made another lunge, she instead swept Fili's feet out from under him. As he was falling, she pounced, and had a knife at his neck as he hit the ground. Fili watched his cousin with wide eyes, frozen. He knew when it was over.

"Enough!" Dwalin roared, and Lydia broke away from her cousin, stalking away from the rest of the Ereborians with a snarl even as Nori shook his head while Dwalin roared after her in their native tongue.

"Ah, let it go Dwalin. Ye can't expect the lass to get it on the first try. Letting go of her fighting style is also kind of like letting go of Frerin. Or did you forget he taught her things like that first?" Nori asked as he arched an eyebrow at the warrior. Dwalin growled, but subsided, glaring darkly at the ground. As Astrid joined her friends who had gathered nearby, she saw Bofur slide up to Dwalin with a disarming, cheery smile and a cheeky comment.

Meanwhile, Nori's eyes were sliding over everyone gathered and then his eyes fell on Bifur. When was the last time the disabled warrior had had a decent spar? "Bifur." At the sound of his name, Bifur looked to the thief and Nori continued, "Would you like to spar?" Bifur considered the question, and then gave a swift nod, a look of serious hope on his face.

"I'll spar with him!" Snotlout shouted suddenly, causing Astrid to jump. She didn't think he'd been paying attention to the Ereborians, and that he'd only approached to flirt with her.

"Lad, you don't know what yer saying. **No one **spars with Bifur except Bofur and Bombur," Dwalin snorted dismissively as Bifur stepped into the center of the semi-circle formed. Snotlout fumed

while Bofur stepped forward, her cheerful grin still in place, and Astrid did a double-take. Both Ereborians had their weapons! Bofur leaned casually on her mattock while Bifur clutched his boar spear.

"Hm, been too long cousin. You sure your skills haven't gone rusty?" Bofur teased good-naturedly. Bifur did not reply with words, simply grunted, and then fell into a ready stance, looking to Dwalin for the signal to start.

"You know the rules. Begin!" Dwalin snapped, and then the two rushed at each other. They were a blur of motion, and Astrid found it a little difficult to keep up with the rapid movement.

"Yeah! Awesome!" Tuffnut said enthusiastically, his sister nodding in agreement, and then they bashed their helmets together. Astrid rolled her eyes and turned her attention back to the dizzying battle. Bifur and Bofur matched each other strike for strike, looks of intense concentration on both of their faces.

"You're using an attack pattern, Bofur! Our enemies may be stupid but they'll pick up on that pattern eventually! Mix it up!" Dwalin snarled, and Bofur subtly shifted, spinning her mattock to block Bifur's strike, and then lunging forward where before she would have stepped back in preparation for a swing. Instead she used her full weight to knock her cousin back. Bifur adapted quickly, grabbing the shaft of the spear and hefting it up to cross parallel over his chest, catching Bofur off-balance by hooking her mattock and tugging forward. With a shout of alarm, Bofur hit the ground face-first and Bifur pointed the spear at her back. She wisely didn't move, sensing that she had lost the battle.

"Enough!" Nori finally snapped, and Bifur blinked for a minute, and then stepped away from his cousin. Bofur punched the ground with her fist before she hauled herself to her feet with a scowl, retrieving her fallen mattock as well, even as Oin approached.

"I don't remember telling you lot Bifur was okay to spar," the healer stated, arms crossed and a very irritated look on his face. Bifur perked up at the sound of his name and started signing things at the old healer. Oin blinked at the rapid sign language, taking a moment to decipher it, and then shook his head and barked at Bifur in what the Vikings had figured out was their native tongue.

"Ah, Thorin says everything's ready to go! Supplies are well stocked, and if we ration correctly there'll be more than enough food for until we reach Ered Luin," Gloin called as he drifted over. He seemed quite proud and excited about the idea. The other Ereborians sprang into action, their sparring forgotten as they rushed around, scooping up any weapons they'd dropped and heading for their ship, communicating in their harsh language and moving seamlessly as one to get everything done.

The Viking teens thought it wise to remove themselves, so they did. The Ereborians seemed terribly excited. It'd be cruel to get in their way and slow them down. Although, if they missed their home so much, why hadn't they returned before then? What was Ered Luin? Why did they need supplies from there?

Mysteries just seemed to crop up whenever the Ereborians were

concerned, and Fishlegs was especially intrigued. They all wished they could learn more, but no one was about to interfere with the fierce warriors. Hiccup went to talk to his dad while the other Viking teens wandered off.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"We appreciate all you are willing to do to help us. Thank you," Thorin Oakenshield was saying as Hiccup walked into his home. The dragon rider looked between his father and Lydia's father in puzzlement. Thorin seemed very grateful and sincere, though grim, and Stoic seemed especially somber.

"Take care of them...please," Stoic said, shaking Thorin's hand, and Thorin nodded grimly.

"Like they were my own subjects."

"Dad? What's going on?" Hiccup asked, making his presence known. The two adults seemed startled, as though they hadn't heard Hiccup enter, and likely they hadn't, so caught up in their own separate thoughts.

"Hiccup. Thorin and I have come to an agreement. The men and I will distract Alvin, prevent him from getting too far, while the Ereborians return to Middle Earth to guard their home. I have agreed to send some dragons with them," Stoic began. Hiccup immediately saw the flaw in the plan and interrupted.

"Dad, the only one of them who knows how to train and ride a dragon is Lydia, and she only did it by pure luck. I don't think sending wild dragons is going to work out--"

Stoic the Vast held up his hand, and Hiccup fell silent. He knew well enough that his father's patience was starting to run thin. "Let me finish, Hiccup. You, and the other dragon riders will accompany them." Silence fell as Hiccup struggled to digest that information. On one hand, he was excited. Travel opened all sorts of possibilities to discover and document new dragons.

One the other, he was wary. No one around knew anything of the mysterious Middle Earth. The rumor was that the land was shrouded in mist that was easy to get lost in. Ships that sailed for the strange land were never seen or heard from again. Sea monsters and dragons supposedly plagued the seas, and others said that the inhabitants were savages who slaughtered any foreigners who touched their shores. Likely, though, other ships were just lost to the mists, crashed on the rocks. Although, if the Ereborians were from Middle Earth, they'd have a map to get there...

Hiccup looked up at the other two people in the room and put a slightly strained smile on his face. "Of course, dad. Great. An adventure. I'll go tell the others."

* * *

><p>Well there you have it! The dragon trainers are heading for Middle Earth. Now, keep in mind, they don't know every detail of what is going on. They just know Alvin wants to conquer Middle Earth and he must be stopped. They don't know about Smaug, or the Lonely

Mountain. They just know that everything the Ereborians say is only a half-truth and that they are not numerous.<p>

Don't worry; they'll find out eventually.

Everyone who has been with me, and I know there are a few out there, you rock for sticking with me! Review, or I'll sic Dwalin on you!

10. Chapter 10

Hello! So, I saw Desolation of Smaug on the 14th. Let me say right now, when it ended I was...upset. I have to wait a whole year to see the third movie! Gr! Also, I saw the trailer for the second dragon movie and there was that one scene with Snotlout and Ruffnut and I was like yes! I shall ship this! SO. I will be incorporating some Snotlout/Ruffnut in this story. Ranting aside, please enjoy this newest chapter of Here We Stand United!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United<p>

Chapter 10

The wind fluttered the sail as Gloin steered the boat towards their destination. The last bit of land before Middle Earth had fallen away quite a while ago, and it seemed the sun slipped farther away as well. Ruffnut had never been the poetic type, but she didn't need to be. Fishlegs was more than capable of that mushy stuff. She could say something about how the dark sky closed in on them like a foreshadowing to their day of reckoning, but what was the point? It was far easier to hit something.

She could swear there was something following them, though. What gave it away? The ripples in the water moving beside them, sometimes behind, and they were far too large to be a fish. When she'd told Lydia, the other girl had brushed it off, stating it was probably a shark. Whatever that was...

When she'd told Hiccup, he'd looked genuinely concerned, and she felt

kind of proud that she'd contributed slightly and done something beneficial and half-way intelligent, but after pointing out the ripples to him when she saw them, he'd just smiled and relaxed, telling her not to worry about it.

Great. So much for that small amount of pride right there. Now she stood at the rail with Barf-Belch, petting the head that was Barf as she glared at the water. Tuffnut thought she was weird. The ripples had become her new obsession as the days crawled past. It was the only thing that could hold her interest in this bleak, never-ending sea. She had no idea what else to do with her time.

The days blurred together as one, and still she watched the ripples in the sea. Nothing else registered in her mind. Only those ripples. Eventually, even Barf-Belch left her to her brooding. Finally, it was Snotlout who dragged her away and over to Lydia. The young Ereborian was hard at work nailing down planks on the deck that had become looser than was liked. "Hey, Lydia! So, I was wondering. Maybe you could tell us some kind of chaos-packed story of Middle Earth to get Ruff's mind off of...whatever she's thinking of."

Every Ereborian in the immediate vicinity froze and looked to the three of them. Lydia hadn't moved a muscle since the last word had left Snotlout's mouth, and slowly she turned, glancing to each Ereborian as though wanting to find a way out. Frodo spoke, "You might as well tell them, Lydia. They need to know it sooner rather than later. They need to know...what we're up against."

Lydia scowled at her brother and snapped, "If you think they need to know it, why don't you tell it!?" Frodo gave his sister a level look, and then Lydia sighed and slumped her shoulders, muttering almost to herself, "I suppose that doesn't make sense, though. You are right. But, if 'Adad asks, its you head, not mine!" Frodo gave an indulgent smile and nod, before shooing the others back to their work while the other Viking teens had wandered over to Lydia as she pulled up a bucket and sat upon it.

"Erebor. It was our home. Where we flourished. A kingdom, built deep into the Lonely Mountain. It was the seventh home of Durin's folk. Our people have not had much luck with holding on to our homes, you see. Seven times we tried, and most failed. Erebor...was the greatest and grandest of them all. We all thought it would work," Lydia said, and shook her head ruefully as her icy eyes took on a far-away look.

"In all the world, I've not seen anything that could compare to Erebor's beauty and splendor. Men came from all around, seeking work, food, gold, protection. Erebor was a fortress, city, stronghold. Armies that marched upon her could not break our defenses. The ceilings were large, towered thousands of feet over all people, everything was carved from the very stone Mahal had used to create us. Bridges over great, yawning chasms, forges burning hotter than the hottest dragon fire, and mines that delved deep, deep into the dark. And the treasury! Piles of gold reaching nearly as high as the domed ceilings! None could comprehend our gold, but we worked hard to mine and forge each nugget, polish and cut every gem. It was foreboding to others, but to Durin's folk, it was home," Lydia began. In her eyes, they could almost picture it, a mountain kingdom overflowing with riches, never short on anything, with even the poorest of people living practically in the lap of luxury.

"What happened?" Hiccup dared to ask after they'd all been silent for a while. Why would the Ereborians leave a place like that if something hadn't happened? Lydia hesitated, looking to the sky. She didn't want to tell them, that much was clear, but why?

"Funny thing about gold...it's a dragon magnet. By the Second Age of Middle Earth, most great dragons had been wiped out. However, one remained. One fine day, the winds of a hurricane swept down from the North. The trees groaned their protests, and snapped their limbs. A shadow fell over the city of Dale as dragon fire from the sky rained down upon them. Dale was a simple, yet utterly and completely rich trading town. It had not been built to withstand such an attack, and so their towers crumbled beneath the wrath of the dragon."

"Wait, wait, wait. What does this Dale city have to do with Erebor, and all that gold?" Tuffnut interrupted. Lydia scowled at him and looked as though she would hit him, but her cousin, Kili, had pulled up a bucket and plopped down beside her with an easy hand on her shoulder, warning her away from responding violently.

"Oh, you see, Dale was right outside Erebor. That's why it was so rich. It depended on trade with us," he explained, and Lydia transferred her glare to her cousin.

"I would have gotten to that if I hadn't of been interrupted!" Kili held up his hands placatingly and gestured for her to continue, so she did. "Smaug the Terrible, had come to Erebor. He cared not for the city he'd destroyed, setting his sights only upon Erebor. Even our great gates could not keep the beast out. He claws, so much like the sharpest swords, crushed our gates like flimsy tin. Countless Ereborians fell beneath his feet, and he breathed fire upon them all. He desecrated our halls and all who still lived fled. Many could not get to an exit, and were burned. I'm sure their corpses still lay beneath the mountain. Smaug gathered and hoarded our gold, and the entrance was sealed. No one has ventured into the Lonely Mountain for eleven years," Lydia finished. She started rushing towards the end of the tale, as though it was too hard for her to tell it, and likely it was.

The Vikings fell silent to digest this new information. What had they gotten themselves into this time? Smaug was not so much like the Red Death as apparently he was quite intelligent, and as he earned "The Terrible" to his name, it was not something they were used to. But, nothing had stopped them before. Why should this?

"Smaug was not without mercy," Bofur said as she walked over and stopped right beside Lydia, who glared up at her while Kili took on a despondent look.

"It was not mercy Bofur! It was his own twisted sense of humor!" Lydia snapped back, jumping to her feet. Bofur barely twitched and Kili sighed, shaking his head. That implied this was not the first time the two Ereborians had had this fight.

"Lydia, it was both. Mercy and humor on his part. Either way, he let the both of us walk away with our lives. You and I both know he must have exceptional intelligence to have the capacity to allow us to leave. I would very much like to know why the two of us still draw breath today if you believe there could be any other explanation than

that," Bofur said wryly, crossing her arms over her chest and meeting Lydia's fierce glare with an even stare.

"Oh, you see here, Smaug looked right at Bofur and Lydia, actually looked Bofur in the eye, and let them live! Weird, huh? I've never heard a dragon do that before!" Kili told the Viking teens excitedly. Hiccup's eyes widened. Kili may not have ever heard such a thing, but Hiccup had seen it, had lived it. Toothless had literally been about to kill him, but had stopped for some reason, and spared his life. That had been the unofficial start of their friendship. If Smaug was like Toothless...maybe things weren't as hopeless as they'd thought.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"We're another day's travel from Middle Earth," Gloin told Thorin, and he nodded in approval. They'd made good time from Berk, and Stoic had done an excellent job keeping Alvin at bay, if the fact that the Outcasts were nowhere in the vicinity was any indication. Unfortunately, Thorin knew that now they were near Middle Earth, Hiccup would become insistent that the Ereborians learn to train the "wild" dragons that had boarded their ship back on Berk. He was not looking forward to it.

"These are the most dangerous waters. Proceed carefully, Gloin. If we crash on those rocks, we'll not be long for this world," Balin warned, and the red-head nodded before leaving Thorin and Balin to discuss their plan of attack. "Laddie, what's troubling you?" Balin asked with a sigh, causing Thorin to jump guiltily. He should have known Balin would pick up on his stress.

"Balin, we're about to go face Smaug. With dragons, our enemies, on our side, supposedly! What's more, I'm putting my wife, son, daughter, and two sister-sons in danger, all for some gold and a kingdom that might be better off lost to us. My father and grandfather went mad because of all that gold, and Thrain...he rallied all able-bodied men and marched on Khazad-dûm. Most of our people were slaughtered in that battle, and Mahal's children scattered to the four winds. What could possibly rally them again, after the last of Durin's heirs failed them so miserably?" Thorin snapped as he began to pace around the room, his thoughts whirling. He was conflicted. More than anything, he wanted his home back, but would it be worth whatever cost he had to pay?

"Now, laddie, you're being too hard on yourself, and your father. Mahal made us to be strong and sturdy. We were meant to endure, and endure we will. Let's not forget the stubbornness either. I'm sure if you ask the other clan heads, they will offer to send troops our way," Balin advised. Thorin paused and considered Balin's words. He'd always had more faith in the nobles than Thorin ever had.

He opened his mouth to say as much, but a scream cut him off. Alarmed, Thorin burst from the room with Balin on his heels, just in time to see one of the Viking teens, Snotlout, yanked over the edge of the ship by a black shadow. "Damn it! Dwalin! Shadowswimmers!" Thorin roared, his voice carrying over all of the chaos. Dwalin grabbed Grasper and Keeper, and without hesitation leapt over the side of the ship after the teen, and Thorin was hot on his heels.

Lydia raced to the railing as her father disappeared into the water, and Gloin dropped anchor to make sure they didn't leave anyone behind, rushing Gimli below deck to safety after that. Lydia bit her lip. If she knew anything about Shadowswimmers, it was that they never hunted alone or on a clear day, unless they were desperate. It was a foggy day, so it was very unlikely that the Shadowswimmer that had grabbed Snotlout was alone. She grew more anxious when they didn't resurface. Everyone stood around on deck, holding their breath, waiting. The world seemed to stop spinning.

Finally, Dori had had enough, and he grabbed his flail and jumped into the water, despite Nori cursing at him for being stupid. More time passed, and then the surface of the water was disturbed. It was not Dori, Thorin, Dwalin, or Snotlout. Lydia found herself gazing into the gaping black maw of a Shadowswimmer, with piercing yellow eyes and rows of razor sharp fangs. Lydia leapt back as it lunged for her. "Frerin!" she screamed, just as her Cauldron burst from the sea. Yes, she knew he'd been behind the boat the whole time. However, had Thorin known he would be furious, so she very carefully didn't give her dragon away. The Shadowswimmer might be faster than Frerin, but it clearly hadn't been counting on his appearance, as Frerin managed to sink his poisonous fangs into the Shadowswimmer before it could retreat or grab Lydia. With a scream, the Shadowswimmer delved back below, and Frerin looked to Lydia.

She pointed to the sea, screaming for Frerin to go, damn it! Her family was in danger! Frerin disappeared beneath the water as well, and waves started to kick up, hinting towards an underwater battle. Then, all fell still, and after a few more moments of stillness, Frerin reappeared, Dwalin, Dori, and Thorin clinging to him. For a moment, everyone wondered what had become of Snotlout, even as Frerin dropped the three Ereborians on deck, and then Dwalin uncurled from where he'd been holding on to the Viking. He wasn't moving, didn't seem to be breathing.

Oin rushed over to revive him, and as Snotlout started coughing up water, Thorin started ranting, "What were you doing? Did no one say to stay away from the edge, to stay completely silent? These are dangerous waters! If no one told him, I want to know why they didn't!" No one said anything, sharing awkward glances, and then Snotlout gathered his strength.

"No, Frodo...Frodo warned me. I didn't listen," he said weakly, avoiding everyone's gaze except Thorin's, meeting the King in Exile's gaze. Thorin's expression turned thunderous.

"Why the hell not? Are you trying to die? When someone tells you something, you better listen!" Thorin exploded, and Snotlout finally flinched back, dropping his gaze. Thorin calmed himself, and continued on in an angry tone, almost to himself, "This was a mistake. We should never have brought these outsiders." Then, he turned from the others and headed down below deck, even as Fishlegs began to whisper to Hiccup.

"Did you see that? Those were Darkbreathers! Oh, I wonder what else we'll see? This is so exciting, dragon species to study and document! This is gonna be good!" Fishlegs said enthusiastically, his voice raising slightly. Hiccup tried to signal to his friend to stop, but it was too late.

"Are yeh serious right now? This is not a game, Laddie! People will. Likely. Die! Yet you get all interested in the dragons when your friend there nearly had all his blood drained of him! If Dwalin, Dori, and Thorin had not jumped after him, and Lydia called on that dragon, Snotlout would be dead right now, a feast for the Shadowswimmers!" Bofur snapped. Her braids were falling out, as though she had been pulling her hair and her eyes watered the tinniest bit. She took a deep breath to calm herself and wiped at her eyes. "Yer just children, I don't expect yeh to understand. You've never seen yer home burned. But please, try to be serious about this!"

She might have continued ranting but Nori was there, placing a reassuring hand on her shoulder and guiding her away. Dwalin sent a glare towards the thief, as though Nori had committed a heinous crime just by placing a hand on Bofur's shoulder, and stalked after them. The other Ereborians took that as their cue, and went back to their normal routines, until only Fili, Kili, Frodo, and Lydia were left.

Hiccup took a step towards them, "Lydia, I am so sorry for what Snotlout did. I'll keep a closer eye on him from now on." Lydia did not respond, turning a cold glare on them. Her brother, sensing a brewing storm, led her away, and Kili gave them sad eyes before following.

"You best be keeping two eyes on him, then. I'm no expert, but Snotlout seems a right idiot, and idiots won't last too long in Middle Earth. They're slaughtered, or killed if they stand in the way of something important. This quest is very, very important. Don't get in our way. Bifur is not particularly stable, the Brothers Ri would kill for each other, and if Dwalin thinks any of you might be a threat to his...obsession...not a one of them will hesitate to cut you down," Fili warned, and then he too left the Vikings alone on deck, wondering once again just what they'd gotten themselves into.

* * *

><p>In case you haven't noticed, there is a little tiny bit of a love triangle going on. Nori and Dwalin are both kind of competing over an oblivious Bofur. I'm personally leaning towards DwalinBofur (I call it Dwofur!) but I would love to hear from you guys and what you think! Should I give Dwofur a turn in the spotlight, or stick with the classic Nofur? I mean I love both pairings, but... *shrug*

Also, I'm not quite sure how to feel about the end of this chapter. Was it good enough?

Lemme know in a review!

11. Chapter 11

Hello! Sorry this took so long getting up! I'll keep this little note up here brief then...yeah that's it. Go read!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 11

"Join the Mad King on his Mad Quest? Funny!"

"Really?"

"Aye, that's exactly what they said. No respect for Uncle Thorin, I tell you! Oh, and get this! They started babbling on about how we should give up on Erebor, and had the balls to tell Uncle to marry Lydia off to that Firebeard prick or the Longbeards would be kicked off the council! Mahal, I thought Auntie Bilba was going to murder them all!"

"I would think so! No sister of mine will be marrying anyone anytime soon!"

It wasn't the oddest conversation he'd walked in on, that Nori knew for sure. However, it was still rather strange. For one, why did Kili know more than Frodo? Frodo was Thorin's son and heir of Erebor. By that logic, it should have been Frodo filling Kili in on what had happened during the meeting. But no, for whatever reason Frodo had not gone to the meeting, Kili had, and now the two were speaking with righteous anger over what had been said about the princess.

"You've got that look again. Would ye calm down? Glaring at everything will not help us get across Middle Earth," Nori spared a glance over his shoulder as Bofur walked up to him with a slightly strained smile. He hated that, when she wasn't happy. Damn it, what had become of them? None of them used to be the way they are now. Ered Luin didn't use to be a cesspool either.

"Okay, look, I know our situation ain't ideal, but if these kids from Berk can do what they say, we'll have easy sailing, er, flying, across Middle Earth. No worries, and then we'll beat Smaug and take back Erebor," Bofur snapped, and even that strained smile was gone from her face, and Nori realized he'd been thinking aloud.

"At least we won't have to deal with the Runners* or Wargs," Nori admitted, trying to be optimistic about the journey. It was worth it for the smile that lit up Bofur's face, flashing those dimples that he loved far too much. What kind of King of the Underworld was he,

though, melting at a bright, dimpled smile from a girl that, by all rights, should not have mattered to him?

"C'mon, Hiccup wants to teach us how to fly. I'm hoping for one of those Deadly Nadders. There's a right pretty purple one calling my name," Bofur said, grabbing Nori by the hand and tugging him back onto the boat where the dragons were kept, below deck. They'd had no choice except to keep the dragons in the cages of the brig. It was the only way Thorin would have allowed the beasts aboard.

"Oh, great, two people actually showed up," Hiccup said as Bofur approached the dragon trainers, still pulling Nori along behind her. Glancing around, Nori realized that Bofur and himself were the only two Ereborians below deck, near the dragons, besides Lydia, but she was busy ignoring everyone.

"Yeah, well, uh, training a dragon and flying it sounds pretty cool, or whatever," Nori tried to brush it off, but Lydia had tuned in once he started talking, snickering and pointing to where Bofur still clasped his hand, as though the toy maker was afraid he'd make a break for it and leave her there alone. Flushing, Nori yanked his hand back, embarrassed to have been caught in a moment of weakness. Then he mentally cursed himself as her expression turned hurt before becoming like ice as she turned to the Vikings.

"Well, we might as well get started. Now, since we don't have much time for you to bond with a dragon, we're going to be using this nifty little plant called dragonnip. Give it to a dragon of your choice and it'll make them happy and friendly," Hiccup stated, holding out two small fistfuls of a green plant that looked more like grass than anything else.

Nori cautiously took the fistful of dragonnip, looking around warily as all the caged dragons perked up, their amber eyes locked on him and Bofur and the small plant in their hands even as Snotlout and the twins opened a couple cages and coaxed the cautious dragons out. Lydia was watching warily as well, one hand on the hilt of her new ax as the purple Deadly Nadder Bofur was talking about earlier approached Bofur slowly, sniffing at the air as it went.

Bofur reached a hand out to the Deadly Nadder, and its eyes seemed to widen as it caught a stronger whiff of the dragonnip. Quicker than Nori would have thought possible, the dragon zipped into Bofur's space, nuzzling at her clenched fist where the dragonnip was and practically purring. Smiling giddily, Bofur gently scratched the dragon under the chin and accepted the fish Astrid passed her, feeding it to the purple Nadder who seemed so much like a puppy now. It was actually incredible. All his life, Nori had thought all lesser dragons were mindless, bloodthirsty beasts, when really that was the farthest thing from the truth.

"Well, good, great, that's great! Alright Nori, your turn. Just...approach the dragon slowly, and offer him your hand. You've got to show him you mean no harm," Hiccup said, gently pushing Nori towards the Nightmare. It stared at him, and he stared back. Just because this had worked for Bofur didn't mean he was comfortable with doing this. But, Hiccup was the dragon trainer, so he was going to trust the Berk teen on this. He stretched out the hand containing the dragonnip, and **no**, Lydia, his hand was **not** trembling as the dragon's snout moved uncomfortably close to his hand. It'd be so easy

for the Nightmare to just bite his hand off, and he rather needed his hands to fight and pick pockets...

It was to his great shock that he didn't lose his outstretched hand moments later, instead the Nightmare followed the Nadder's lead and chose to grudgingly press his snout to Nori's hand.

"See, now that's not so bad is it?" Hiccup said as the two Ereborians spent a little time with their new dragons. Bofur had a wide smile on her face and even Nori looked genuinely happy, instead of like he was up to mischief. And Lydia smiled, because things were looking a little better for them now.

BREAK

Peace never did last, when it came to an Ereborian. Durin's folk never had great fortune. Alvin was persistent, Lydia would give him that. Their second day in Ered Luin, the Outcasts had caught up to them, and set their catapults on the town.

The dragon trainers, and few Ereborians who could ride a dragon, were forced to hoist their friends onto the backs of a relatively tame dragon and take off into the flaming night. The Outcasts had the drop on them, and if they'd already made it to Ered Luin, it was quickly becoming a race against time to get to Erebor. So they rode off into the night, some screaming protests as the now flaming town disappeared behind them.

Lydia looked back, and what her eyes saw was the fire from Smaug the Terrible, flames dancing around the great halls of her ancestors, and screaming Ereborians as they burned in their home. It burned, and she watched.

* * *

><p>Dun dun dun! Lol no not much of a cliffhanger. Still, not a bad chapter, I suppose. I had to give the Company a swift kick in the rear as they really didn't want to get a move on with my plot.</p>

And I'm seriously starting to think my schedule will never get back under my control. Seriously, sporadic and random updates abound! No promises on when the next chapter will be up.

*Runners, or Speed Stingers. I'll have you all know, I was going to bring the Speed Stingers into this story even before the episode with them in it! Just wanted to make that perfectly clear.:)

Review!

12. Chapter 12

Hey guys! So, for being loyal to this story, and patient with my slow self, here is an update! We'll go with Bilbo's (Bilba) point of view for part of this chapter, and in the second half...you'll see!

Go check out EasternWolf23! She's got an awesome Hobbit fanfic in progress!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 12

It was close to midnight by the time the rolling hills of the Shire came into view below them. While Bilba looked down at her home longingly, she did not ask that they stop. She would not endanger the Company nor the Shirelings by landing for a rest and a visit with her family. Thorin glanced towards her as the flew over several Shireling holes, but did not speak to her, knowing there was nothing he could do to comfort her at the moment, and not willing to stop and land either.

Sooner, rather than later, Bilba knew they would have to land, though. Bofur and the Deadly Nadder she had bonded with were quickly tiring, as Bifur and Bombur had both tried to squeeze onto the dragon with her. Bombur's weight alone strained the dragon. Nori had Dori and Ori with him, and Lydia had packed her brother, Fili, Kili, and Gimli onto her Scauldrone.

The dragon riders from Berk had done something similar, carrying as many Ereborians as they could. Hiccup had managed to teach Balin and Bilba how to fly the day before the Outcasts had attacked Ered Luin, and Dwalin now rode tensely on an aggressive Nadder with Thorin sitting stiffly behind him. Despite their rush to flee Ered Luin, they'd done well getting organized.

So they flew through the skies the whole night, until the dawning sun peeked over the horizon and Hiccup called, "We need to stop! The dragons can't keep going like this!" The Ereborians shouted to each other in Khuzdul, before Thorin finally agreed they would land, though they had to remain on their guard. The dragons landed on the Great East Road, shortly outside of Elrond's territory, and Thorin decided they would make camp here. Bilba looked around at her subjects and friends. Bifur, Bofur, and Bombur were attempting to put together a quick soup for breakfast, and everyone else was setting up their stuff and laying out their bedrolls. Lydia was tending to her dragon, and Gimli hovered nearby, watching, but too wary to get much closer to the water-based dragon.

All of the Ereborians chose to ignore the skeleton of a shack that once belonged to an old farmer and his wife. They'd been at sea for seven years; things were bound to change. Likely the old couple had perished from old age. Hiccup, however, was worried by it.

"Uh, is it really safe to be camping here?" he asked, sitting down on a log next to Dwalin as the warrior sharpened his two axes, Grasper and Keeper.

"Aye, laddie, safest place you'll find in the Wilds. Sun's rising, and darker creatures haven't wandered this far south since the Dark Age anyway, when Sauron ruled the land," Dwalin replied, barely looking up from what he was doing, even as little Ori tentatively offered the warrior a soup bowl as Bombur had quickly whipped up some soup.

"Sauron? Who is that?" Astrid asked as she boldly sat down next to the Ereborian warrior. Dwalin eyed her, but chose not to shove her off the log they were perched on as he gently, lovingly, set his weapons aside and began to eat.

"Ah, I'm not so great a storyteller lass. Best to ask Bofur or Bilba. They're better at weaving fanciful tales," Dwalin snorted dismissively. Nori frowned as he overheard the warrior's words.

"Sauron was no fanciful tale, son of Fundin. You'd do well to remember that...and besides, I don't think Bilba or Bofur would take too kindly to what ye be implying," the star-haired thief snapped as he distractedly accepted a bowl from his little brother, who then wandered off to sit with Frodo as the Prince read by the dim light in the sky, carefully not spilling any soup on his book.

"Nori's right, Dwalin," Bilba said, and Dwalin jumped guiltily. She knew he'd not meant to imply anything, but she couldn't help but be slightly irritated that he'd be so quick to brush off the old tales, passed down from generation to generation to ensure that nothing like it happened ever again. Middle Earth would very likely not survive another Sauron incident.

"So...Sauron?" Astrid prodded, and Bilba hesitated. They were just children, children who had not grown up on Middle Earth, were not accustomed to the kind of dangers that resided on their lands, and the ghost story of the Dark Lord Sauron would surely scare them out of their wits, and on the Great East Road, you especially needed to keep your wits about you. Wargs could strike at any moment, and even if the sun was rising on the horizon, that didn't mean they were completely safe from the Runners either. Thorin had spoken to her, and they were to protect these teens like their own subjects. That did not include scaring them half out of their minds.

"Oh, I don't think now is really the time for ghost stories, considering we're about to rest for the night, or should I say morning...maybe later," Bilba dismissed, and then urged the Viking teens and the younger Ereborians to curl up into their bedrolls for some decent shut eye.

"Bofur, Dwalin, Gloin, you've got first watch," Thorin stated, before he retreated to his own bedroll. Bilba sighed and went to hers as well, knowing it would be on her to convince Thorin that the others

could keep their eyes open for a few hours and that he should rest...Mahal and Yavanna, give her strength.

BREAK

Gloin was purposely sitting as far from her and Dwalin as possibly, Bofur was sure of it. He was not very discreet. Well, whatever Dwalin was up to, she was not going to listen to it. Dwalin and Nori had suddenly started acting like idiots around her, growling at each other and treating her as less than them, or going out of their way to appear stronger. It was, quite frankly, pissing her off.

"Bofur..." Dwalin began, and his hand gently touched her shoulder. Bofur dutifully ignored him. "Okay, you don't have to speak. Just listen. I know I've been...an idiot recently," he explained, and Bofur couldn't help but snort at the understatement. Dwalin ignored it and continued on, "And for that I am truly sorry. Please know I care deeply for you...and if we happen to survive this quest to reclaim Erebor, I would very much like to court you." Bofur immediately stiffened, even as Dwalin walked away to the other corner of camp (it was required that they form a triangle around their sleeping friends), and she coughed as a bug flew into her mouth because her jaw had dropped in her shock.

Dwalin was her friend, and an excellent warrior, an honorable man of the line of Durin, but she had never had a romantic thought of him before, nor had she even suspected he might harbor some kind of affection for her...now his behavior towards Nori made so much more sense. Indeed, it even gave light to his sudden urge to appear as the most masculine of the Company. But wait...if he'd been acting like that because he liked her, and felt threatened by Nori, then that could mean...did Nori have feelings for her as well? Mahal save her. She wanted to chase this thought pattern more, but knew this was a foolish thing while she was on watch, so she forced herself to stay alert.

And so, as the sun slowly rose on the horizon, gradually climbing towards what Bilba fondly referred to as "Double Breakfast Time," she was relieved to be able to rise from her seat perched upon a rock and shake Dori awake for him to take over the watch for her. With that done, Bofur crawled to her bedroll, which was safely situated between her brother and cousin, but found that sleep stubbornly eluded her. For what felt like hours, she tossed and turned, until finally she settled into an uneasy sleep. Then, what felt like moments later, but was actually close to five hours, someone was shaking her shoulder. Bofur didn't even bother to open her eyes, she simply rolled onto her stomach with a groan and buried her face in the bundle of tunics that acted as her pillow.

"Up, cousin. We're leaving," Bifur grunted. Bofur groaned, but didn't move. She heard Bifur heave a loud sigh, and then suddenly she was lifted out of her bedroll and gently set on her feet. Finally prying her eyes open, she glared at her axe-ridden cousin, who simply smiled gently at her and ruffled her hair, which only irritated her further.

"Ah, best leave her alone, Bif. Have you not been counting the days?" Bofur's face flushed with either anger or embarrassment that Bombur implied she was becoming moody because of her cycle. Bifur let out a

rumbling life, and Bofur was very tempted to smack him, but refrained from doing so as it would not help her case.

_ "Come on, then, Bo. Only a little farther to Imladris and then you'll get a proper rest," _Bifur encouraged, and reluctantly Bofur shuffled over to her purple Nadder, heaving herself up onto its back as her cousin climbed up behind her. Bombur had been given a Gronckle as it was the only dragon sturdy enough to hold his weight.

"Say, Lydia, your Scauldrone ain't looking too good," Nori commented as Lydia helped her family onto her dragon.

"Aye, I'd imagine not. His scales are getting dried out. Good thing we're almost to Imladris. Elrond would be willing to let him use the fountain, aye?" Lydia asked, though no one responded, as they suspected it was a rhetorical question. The dragons took to the air for a final time, the pace slightly more relaxed than it had been last night. It was smooth flying right to Rivendell, and they quickly landed in the courtyard.

Lindir greeted them, "Ah, Thorin Oakenshield. Welcome to the Valley of Imladris. With...dragons. Hm. Well then. You must all be tired, and hungry. Come, eat, rest, I will fetch Lord Elrond."

And just like that, they were safe.

* * *

><p>This chapter didn't want to end. Also, Bofur **finally** gets a clue! Sorry, no Snotlout/Ruffnut interactions yet, and I'm just basically ignoring Tuffnut and Fishlegs right now. Don't worry, they'll get more time later! This story is far from over! Oh Lindir, it's so fun to mess with you! Lol. Anyway, since I felt so loved with all my reviews from last time I updated, I decided to give you guys chapter twelve!

So, don't let me down!

Review!

13. Chapter 13

Guys guys guys! This story has more reviews than Pain Is My Medication! Although, still at most popular is Danger Is My Middle Name...Let's change that, yeah?

Go check out EasternWolf23! She's got an awesome Hobbit fanfic in progress!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

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* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 13

"This place is so amazing," Fishlegs said to himself as he wandered around Rivendell, stopping every so often to marvel at and sketch a plant that he felt was of particular interest. Meatlug trotted after him, sniffing idly at her surroundings, but leaving them alone for the most part. After all, plants didn't make much difference to a Boulder Class dragon. "Yeah, I know girl. We'll find you some nice rocks to munch on later, yeah?" Fishlegs offered as he passed a fancy fountain where Lydia's Cauldron was relaxing with Lydia nearby sharpening her axe. She took no heed of him, too focused on her task, nor did she noticed Tuffnut slowly creeping towards her with a devilish smile on his face. Fishlegs winced and then scurried onward. He had no desire to be nearby when that pot boiled over.

Farther away from the main paths he wandered, until he was well and truly "lost" with no sign of humans for several yards. Fishlegs was quite content with this. He was a bookish lad, and even though he loved hanging out with his friends and being included, he often sought solitude so that he could have a few moments with his one true love: books. And Meatlug, of course. He was truly surprised when a Terrible Terror scuttled across his path, pausing to stare at him with large, unblinking eyes.

Then there was a great commotion from the bushes, and the Terror scurried off as Ruffnut, Snotlout, Fili, and Kili tumbled across his path. Kili sprang up first, rushing forward to grab Fishlegs at the shoulders and shake him. "That dragon. Which way did it go man, which way did it go?!" he wailed, eyes wild and desperate. Fishlegs desperately wanted to get away from Kili in that moment. That look he had about him was much like that of a cornered animal. Cornered animals were dangerous. Luckily, Fili was there to pull his brother away from the distressed Viking.

"Ah, what my brother here means to ask, Master Ingerman, is would you mind terribly to point out which way the dragon went? It's very, very important that we catch it," Fili explained calmly, relaxing Fishlegs slightly. Fili was calm and levelheaded, even in a "dire" situation like this. He'd been trained to be like that for a good hunk of his life, until Frodo and Lydia came along. By that point, most of the calm and collected traits of a Crown Prince had been drilled into him and he was stuck with them, even though he was not the heir, nor the spare. When things went south, out of the four royals, it was either him or Frodo who could be trusted to keep their wits about them. Kili was too rambunctious and Lydia too hotheaded for politics, which was quite worrying because if anything happened to Frodo, Lydia would be forced to step up and become Queen Under the Mountain and she just did not have the patience for it.

So Fishlegs pointed to his right, where the little dragon had gone, and Kili shot off in that direction like a bat out of hell. Fili sighed for a reason that remained unknown to Fishlegs, but he too walked briskly in the direction Fishlegs had pointed to. That just left Ruffnut and Snotlout standing by him. "Hey Ruff what do you say we let the Princes figure this out on their own and we go explore?" Snotlout offered, his voice filled with his usual self-confidence, but to Fishlegs eyes, he seemed a lot more hesitant when asking this of Ruffnut. Ruffnut looked thoughtful for a moment, as though trying to come up with a reason to refuse, but shrugged when one didn't come to mind and the other two Vikings departed.

Well. That was interesting. It seemed that Snotlout had moved on from Astrid and was pursuing Ruffnut. However, the question of whether or not Ruffnut knew it was prominent in his mind. Her heart was in the right place, but Ruffnut was just not that bright. Although, Snotlout wasn't being overly obvious about like he had been with Astrid, either. He really didn't want to think about it though so he dropped the question and continued to wander Rivendell.

As he wandered, he heard voices coming from a secluded part of the gardens, and he crept towards them as silently as he could, shushing Meatlug when she made too much noise. So his dragon hung back while he moved as close as he dared. Peering around a bush, he spotted Elrond, Thorin, and Bilba in deep, serious discussion.

"Much has changed in the seven years you've been gone. You must have noticed that there are many missing settlements along the Great East Road, and the kindly old farmer and his wife were eaten some months ago, torn limb from limb by Wargs. We tried to get to them, but it was too late. Not only that, but the Runners have grown more bold, going so far as to attack either in the early hours of dawn as the sun rises, or just before sundown. All manners of darkness have swept down from the mountains and grown quite bold. But the most troubling development is the problem in the Greenwood," Elrond explained, his face grave and back held stiffly.

"Do not speak to me of the Greenwood. What cares do I have for Thranduil and his kin, after they turned their backs on us when Smaug came? I care nothing of the Greenwood," Thorin rumbled ominously, his face dark for another reason besides the trouble Elrond spoke up. Hidden in The King in Exile's blue eyes was immeasurable hate towards Thranduil.

"Thorin, don't be rude! Let Lord Elrond finish!" Bilba scolded, and Thorin grumbled some more before subsiding, at least willing to hear what their ally had to say before he would pass judgement.

"As I was saying, we received word from the Woodsman, Radagast, that a sickness had laid siege to Greenwood. Darkness crept in past the borders and twisted the land and trees. Giant spiders, servants to the Dark Lord, prowled beneath the trees. Thranduil would not ask for help, though, so we could do nothing. Last we heard from Radagast, he was going to investigate rumors of a Necromancer in Dol Guldur. We have not heard from him since. Now, locals call Greenwood Mirkwood, for all things fowl that crawl beneath the forest's canopies," Elrond finished, and Fishlegs felt a chill go down his spine as he listened. Bilba and Thorin seemed disturbed as well.

"This is ill news. If it is the enemy...then another war is coming.

Middle Earth will be torn asunder. And surely the Mewlips within the darkest corners of the old fortress will rally under...him," Bilba shuddered, rubbing at her arms and glancing around warily. Thorin pulled her close and rubbed her back soothingly.

"Do not fear the Mewlips, wife. They are nothing more than an old tale, meant to scare little children to stop them from wandering too far from home before they came of age," Thorin assured, but Bilba did not seem comforted, even though Elrond seemed to agree with Thorin.

"Sauron is considered an old wives tale by many, and yet we all know he is out there...that he will rise again. We cannot ignore this most hated enemy, Thorin, nor can we rule out the viciousness of the Mewlips being against us!" Bilba hissed so quietly that Fishlegs had to shift forward, straining to hear more, and in doing so, a branch snapped under his weight. The three adults looked in his general direction, and Fishlegs bolted, and as he scampered back to Meatlug, all he had heard weighed heavily on his mind.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"It is folly to attempt to fly over the Misty Mountains. You'd be flattened against the rocks within seconds," Thorin snorted, and Hiccup frowned.

"Now I know we're just kids, and the rest of you are rookie flyers at best, but I doubt we'll be flattened against any rocks for lack of skill," Hiccup protested, and the other dragon trainers nodded in agreement.

"Thorin meant no disrespect to your talent, Master Hiccup," Balin cut in smoothly, stepping in front of Thorin with a warning look to the King. Once again, the old advisor had to do damage control. Thorin did not have political tact, nor could he make nice with anyone other than those close to him, or so it would seem. "It's just, over half the time the skies over the Misty Mountains are stormy and brutal. Just walking through the mountain range is a great hazard, and it'd be a death wish to fly. While it might take more time, it is safer to walk through the mountains. Now, the way I see it, since this walking journey will likely completely drain our supplies, we could stop at Beorn's. It is my understanding that Bofur is good friends with the man. It would be foolish to not seek shelter with him," Balin finished, pointing to the map before them that they had been consulting.

Thorin nodded in grudging agreement, and Hiccup finally relented, seeing the logic in Balin's argument. "Very well. Then we'll be off. Elrond has already graciously given us our much-needed supplies, and has also agreed to watch over Gimli while we travel to Erebor," Balin stated, rolling up the map and tucking it into his pack. "Now, lad, I won't lie to you. The journey through the Misty Mountains will likely be the most difficult thing you will ever endure in your life. No one would hold it against you if you wished to stop," Balin offered.

Hiccup met the kindly elder man's eyes, and saw in them what this truly was. It was their last chance to back out.

"If it's all the same to you, Master Balin, we'll be coming with

you."

* * *

><p>Ugh, lame ending is lame. Anyway, this is the last chapter before I acknowledge canon again. Next chapter, will be super long. We'll see the Misty Mountains, Goblins, and a surprise dragon!<p>

Oh, there's also a poll on my profile! Check it out!

Anyway, review guys!

14. Chapter 14

Hey so I figured I'd get this chapter up since I feel really shitty and just had the worst Monday ever since a guy who I thought was my friend told the guy I liked that I like him. Ugh. Drama. Hate it.

That's why I love writing sites like this so much. Less drama, less pressure. Absolutely wonderful.

Go check out EasternWolf23! She's got an awesome Hobbit fanfic in progress!

Rated-T

Warnings

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Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

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* * *

><p>Here We Stand United<p>

Chapter 14

The sky was dark over the mountain range, angry storm heads swirling about the peaks of the Misty Mountains. Thorin was right; they could not fly over, or through, that. The dragons would be tossed about like ragdolls if they made an attempt to fly through that storm. "The weather's getting worse, 'Adad!" Lydia shouted as the winds kicked up, throwing their hair into their faces. Most Ereborians could still see because their braids remained firmly clasped by their bronze, decorative hair clips, but the Viking teens were pretty much blind at this point, especially Ruff and Tuff because they had such long hair.

"We must find shelter or we'll be blown straight off the side of the mountain!" Balin called over the roaring winds. Thorin might have replied, but if he did no one could hear it, as the mountain they were walking on suddenly gave a low groan, and then with a rumble, large boulders came tumbling down towards them.

Hiccup jolted as a massive hand clamped onto his shoulder and tugged him back against the wall of the mountain. His feet almost shot out from under him, but Dwalin had a firm grasp on his shoulder and was keeping him steady. As he regained his footing, he risked a glance around the massive Ereborian warrior and saw Ori being steadied in much the same way. Other Ereborians were pressing the rest of the Vikings back away from the edge as well. Then, of course things just had to get worse, because the heavens finally opened up and it started to rain.

It pelted against their skin like pinpricks of cold fire, and as they trudged onward, the slopes of the mountain became slicker and slicker. The only being even relative happy with the rain was Lydia's Cauldron. For Hiccup, it became very difficult to keep his balance, especially with his prosthetic. He was a little worried he'd fall off the cliff and no one would be able to get to him in time. It turned out, he wasn't the only one who was finding walking difficult. A shout rang out and Hiccup could only watch in horror as Ruffnut's feet shot out from under her and she almost took a tumble over the edge of the mountain, hand grabbing onto a rock at the last moment. Even a second later and she would have missed completely and become nothing more than a splotch at the base of the mountain.

"Ruff!" Snotlout shouted, and he lunged for her at the same time as Tuff. Those two would have fallen from the edge of the cliff as well, if not for their dragons. Hookfang snapped up Snotlout in an instant, and Belch's head snaked around to grab Tuff by the hair while Barf's head followed Ruff over the side and snagged her at the collar, lifting her from where she was dangling off the cliff side.

"No worries. I'm good," Ruff announced as Barf set her down, keeping a hold of her until she was steady. Belch had done the same for Tuff, but Hookfang seemed to have decided to carry Snotlout as the Monstrous Nightmare made no move to put his rider down. Snotlout seemed to have a problem with this as he was protesting the treatment rather loudly.

"'Adad, I think I see a cave over there. We can take shelter until the storm lets up," Frodo advised, pointing ahead to where they could just make out a dark patch in the mountainside. Thorin nodded and encouraged the group to move onward. They did as Thorin instructed and pressed on until they reached the dark area that turned out to indeed be a cave. However, as the Vikings made a move to enter, Thorin outstretched an arm to stop them.

"Dwalin, search the whole space before we enter. Caves in the mountain are rarely unoccupied," Thorin instructed. Dwalin gave a swift nod and then disappeared into the cave. They waited for what felt like an eternity, but was really only about seven minutes until Dwalin returned.

"The cave is empty. It will provide plenty of shelter for all of us, including the dragons," Dwalin reported, and it was with great sighs of relief that they all filed into the dimly lit cave. Gloin and Oin

flung down supplies that they'd kept secure and dry in their packs.

"Let's get a fire going, aye?" Gloin offered with a smirk. Oin puzzled over what his brother had said as he didn't have his trumpet out, and then nodded in agreement when it registered what he'd heard. Then the two brothers set about setting the wood in an area where the fire wouldn't catch on their packs and grabbing their flint rocks. However, Thorin quickly put a stop to that.

"No, no fire. That could alert someone to our presence. We definitely don't want the residents of Goblin Town raining down on our heads," Thorin snapped. Gloin grumbled but put everything back in his pack while everyone else settled in, talking quietly amongst themselves and huddled together for warmth.

"Ori, let's take a look at that map," Balin suggested, and Ori stood from his spot next to his brothers and scurried over to sit by Thorin and Balin. The King, the Scribe, and the Advisor spoke in hushed tones together while the Vikings inched closer to where Bofur and Lydia sat, serious looks on their faces as they huddled over a different map and spoke of its contents in low tones.

"Lydiaâ€|what did Thorin mean by Goblin Town?" Hiccup tentatively asked after Bofur had noticed them and packed the map away. Lydia stared at them for a moment, drawing a fur coat from her pack and pulling it close around her shoulders.

"Ah, it is a horrid string of tales among our people. Mahal's children have certain things that are expected of them, and to break these expectations is to be punished harshlyâ€|or it was, several years ago. Today if you break expectations there is no punishment. However, there are still laws. Fallen Ereborians who broke the expectations of the last age, or murderers and molesters of this age, were banished from the mountain. Should they ever return to Erebor, they would be killed. It was a punishment worse than death," Lydia explained as the Vikings huddled close, eyes wide and alert as they concentrated on the story to avoid falling asleep.

"They were exiled into the Misty Mountains, doomed to wander alone forever until they perished. That wasn't what happened, though. They retreated into the caves left behind by the Skin-Changers and built their own society. They built rickety structures underground and stayed in their new little home, never venturing into the sunlight, and they feasted upon the flesh of innocent passers-by who fell into their clutches!" Nori shouted as he leapt from the shadows, grabbing at Bofur's shoulders and causing her to let out a shriek. When she realized who it was, a scowl quickly overtook her countenance.

"Nori of Ri that was NOT funny!" Bofur shouted, arms crossed over her chest as she gave Nori a fierce glare before turning away from him. Nori just laughed as he plopped down next to the other Ereborian, Lydia rolling her eyes at the thief's antics.

"Ah, come on Bo. You know it was funny," Nori teased, poking Bofur in the ribs and smirking viciously. He'd meant no harm, only trying to spook the Vikings. Bofur was just collateral damage in his quest to terrorize the younglings. Bofur didn't reply, simply scowled off into the distance and Nori sighed, dropping an arm around Bofur's shoulder and giving her a hug.

Bofur was still angry with him, though, and removed herself from his embrace, even if it had been admittedly warmer having his arm curled around her shoulders. Nori slumped in defeat and slunk away like a kicked puppy. Ori frowned worriedly as he took notice from the across the cave, but didn't move. He'd talk to Miss Bofur later on Nori's behalf. He knew perfectly well that the thief was smitten with the toymaker, and the small scribe encouraged it as discreetly as he could. Nori didn't like emotions and had tried so hard to deny any attraction to the older woman ever since he'd met her.

"Wow that was kind of harsh, Bofur. You've never snubbed Nori like that, especially not for something so...unimportant," Lydia remarked. She had one eyebrow raised in bewilderment as she wrung her hair out over her shoulder, shivering as the cold rain water ran down her tunic. Bofur slumped over and gave a sigh, rubbing a hand across her face.

"I'm just confused. Dwalin admitted he would like to court me a few days ago, and I think Nori might as well. I don't know what I feel for Dwalin, and I've never thought of Nori as more than a friend. I'm afraid they're both going to make me choose and I need time before I even think about accepting any courtship," Bofur admitted, pulling her knees up to her chest and wrapping her arms around them, still shivering slightly. Her many layers were soaked, and while they kept her warm normally, having so many layers drenched and heavy with rainwater were like asking for hypothermia.

Bofur jumped as suddenly a relatively dry and warm coat was draped over her shoulders. She glanced over her shoulder just in time to see Dwalin walking over to Thorin. She winced. "Did he hear everything I said?" Bofur asked tentatively. Lydia shook her head.

"No. He only heard about half," Ruff supplied helpfully, and Bofur stared at her in horror. She had momentarily forgotten the Vikings were sitting by them and she had just confessed a very personal thing to a bunch of strangers. Also, there was the fact the Dwalin probably wouldn't ever want to speak to her again. That was upsetting. Bofur scrubbed at her face to keep the tears at bay.

"Eh, don't worry about it Bofur. He looked like he understood your reasoning," Lydia added, trying to cheer her up. Bofur was normally a happy person, and there always seemed to be something wrong with the world on the rare occasion Bofur would become melancholy. Bofur smiled weakly to make Lydia feel better.

Suddenly, the ground rumbled, and there was the sound of metal against metal. Then where they were sitting lurched to the side, like someone had just tried to push the whole mountain. "What was that?" Fishlegs cried out. Cries of alarm rang through the caves as people sprang to their feet and rushed around. Dwalin lurched to Bofur's side and helped her upright, keeping a hold of her shoulders to steady her.

Thorin glanced around rapidly as the whole cave trembled, and then he seized Ori's map. He studied the territories quickly, and then his eyes fell with horror over the area they estimated they were near. If they were in fact where Ori said they were, and if the territories had expanded in the Misty Mountainsâ€

"Goblins! Out of the cave, out!" Thorin roared, and they all scrambled towards the entrance, the dragons crying out and twisting about in confusion.

"Barf, Belch, it's okay, come on, look at me. We have to get out of here, let's go," Ruff cried, trying and failing to gently coax her Hideous Zippleback out of the cave while Tuff screamed and made a break for the exit. However, no one, Ereborian, Viking, or dragon, made it out of that cave, because the ground opened up underneath them and they fell down, down, down, into Goblin Town.

Bofur cried out as she landed on the stone ground, and then all the breath was knocked from her lungs as the Princess landed on top of her, and then Gloin on top of Lydia. Gloin immediately leapt to his feet, apologizing to Bofur and Lydia both as he helped them up. A screeching filled the caves, bouncing around and off the walls, and thundering footsteps raced towards them

Bofur barely had time to think before someone tugged on her arm, yanking her into a small alcove, and then Lydia was shoved in next to her. Bofur turned as best as she could with a snarl, but blinked in surprise when she realized it was Nori who had grabbed her and Lydia. The thief pressed a finger to his lips to indicate silence, and Bofur and Lydia nodded.

The three Ereborians watched as swarms of Goblins yanked at the Company and the Vikings, and poked and prodded at the dragons, but ultimately left the dragons alone, except for the Viking's dragons. The dragons the Ereborians had been riding were only tolerating them, and didn't seem to care too much that their riders were being dragged away. However, the dragons the Vikings rode were loyal to their riders, and were hissing and spitting at the Goblins. When Snotlout's dragon puffed up and lit its whole body on fire, Thorin shouted for Snotlout to get the Nightmare under control unless he wanted them all to go up in flames.

Hookfang finally settled and then the Goblins yanked everyone away from them. As the Goblins disappeared around the corner, Nori held Bofur and Lydia back for a few minutes before they finally crept out of their little alcove. "How are we going to free everyone? There are who knows how many Goblins living down here! And it would be terribly stupid to use fire-breathing dragons! The infrastructure is shitty at best, made of rickety old wooden boards, and we'd all go up in flames within minutes!" Bofur exclaimed in frustration, not even bothering to keep her voice down.

"Hush!" Nori hissed, clapping a hand over the toymaker's mouth as his hazel eyes darted about. They held still for a moment, listening for more Goblins. When they heard nothing, they all breathed a collective sigh of relief.

"Frerin, come!" Lydia called in Khuzdul, and moments later her Scauldron slithered into view. He'd fallen a few feet away and had stayed still as the others were taken away. He hadn't seen his rider captive, and so he was content to sit and wait for her to call. Now he seemed quite happy to see her, practically purring as he coiled his neck around his rider.

Nori grinned, all teeth and harsh edges. He was a schemer all the way, and the Scauldron was definitely going to give them an edge.

"That gives me an idea. Listen close like: here's the plan..."

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"So, mighty Oakenshield, how does it feel to be a nobody, to be at the bottom of the chain, to be completely helpless before a king who holds your life in the very palm of his hand?" the Goblin King taunted as Thorin watched with pain in his eyes. His subjects, his people, his family, his friends, they were being tortured. He really shouldn't be so surprised: he'd exiled and banished some of these Goblins. These filthy creatures who weren't fit to be called human, they danced around, crazed grins on their grotesque features.

He wasn't too surprised the Goblins had machines that did the torturing for them. Most of the twisted men and women who had become Goblins were misunderstood, highly disturbed geniuses.

Dwalin, the bravest warrior this side of the Misty Mountains, had taken out twenty Goblins before they took him down, and they whipped mercilessly at his back, crying out in glee at the chunks of flesh they ripped from the warrior's scarred, tattooed back.

Dori, the strongest of them all, had been knocked clean out, and put on a wheel, arms and legs strapped to the four corners, and they spun that wheel, and spun, and spun, and spun, and the Goblins all took aim with blades, chucking them at Dori in hopes of hitting a vital area in this twisted game of theirs.

Ori, sweet, brave little Ori, naïve little Ori, his torture was not physical, but a mental kind of pain. It was even more distressing for the lad that he had to endure watching his eldest brother spun on a wheel and nearly hit with a knife who knew how many times over. Balin, Gloin, Oin, Bifur, Bombur the Vikings, his sister-sons, and his own precious lad, Frodo. It was unbearable for him to watch. He'd rather they torture him instead. Anything but what they were doing now! He didn't know what had become of Nori, Bofur, or his daughter, but he hoped they were alright. He hoped they were safe, because he could bear no more.

Especially not with the worst of it all. Bilba, his darling, wonderful wife...the Goblins found it amusing to try to pull her bones apart. Her cries of pain pained him more than anything else in all of Middle Earth and beyond.

He didn't know what happened, or how it happened. One moment they were being tortured, the next the Goblin King had been knocked from the platform and plummeted towards the bottom of the mountain. The other Goblins scattered, screeching as they were scalded by...hot water? "Lydia," Thorin breathed, embracing his daughter as she climbed off the back of her Cauldron and tackle-hugged him.

Nori and Bofur freed everyone, and Thorin gratefully gathered his family close, reassuring himself that they were all well, before he led his Company onward, the wild dragons coaxed to follow along by the Vikings. Lydia raced with her family through Goblin Town, even as they were assaulted on all sides by swarms of Goblins, screeching and carrying on as they scurried like rats around their shitty-made bridges and ladders.

At some point, they stared cutting ropes, and slowly but surely they

were dropped closer and closer to flat ground. The tunnels seemed to go on forever, never ending, and the Goblins kept coming. Lydia cut them down as they came at her, spinning into her attacks majestically and gracefully in the typical Durin style. At last, the last rope was cut, and this was the one that sent them plunging to the bottom of the shaft.

"Move! Move!" Lydia shouted as everyone struggled to regain their footing, helping Bifur haul Bombur back to his feet as waves of Goblins scrambled after them. They all high-tailed it out of there, racing down the remaining, twisting paths. Finally, as they came to the exit, the Goblin's cries fell away, as their lives living eternally underground feasting only upon flesh has made them hate sunlight with a passion. Lydia brought up the rear as their pace slowly to a steady jog, and, just as she was about to follow Bombur out into the sunlight, something made her pause.

Tilting her head to the side curiously, she glanced around. Strange. She thought she'd heard something. Then, something glimmered at her from the ground, and she stooped to pick it up. It was a plain, golden band, a ring. She held it to the light, turning it this way and that. It didn't seem to be of particular value. But, despite the Ereborian training in her saying to leave the worthless thing behind, she pocketed it anyway and finally followed her family, climbing onto her Scauldrone with Frodo as the others sailed towards the Carrock just ahead of them.

As the sun rose on the horizon, and they all looked up, many stopped atop the Carrock, hands lifted to shield their eyes from the light as they stared off into the distance. There, a large speck in the distance, rising tall and proud above the land, was the Lonely Mountain.

They were almost there; they would be there soon.

* * *

><p>Oh geez. That was long. This was another of my "marker" chapters. And now, Lydia has the One Ring. Mwuahaha I am diabolical! ...And tired. Goodnight guys.<p>

REVIEW!

15. Chapter 15

Hey what's up? Good Lord is it hot outside! ...No? Not gonna work is it? *sigh* I'm SORRY I've been gone so long! I've literally got pretty much every chapter planned out, except for THIS chapter right here. It did not want to be written. Rest assured, though, this story has not been abandoned, nor have any of my other stories!

Oh, and just a note: **Whichever nimrod that's been blowing up my inbox by repeatedly reviewing chapter 1 and telling me to delete the story, do me a favor and SHUT THE HELL UP! What you are doing is flaming this story just because I have one OC in it, and while I appreciate hearing OPINIONS and CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM, I will not tolerate flames. Now, I am going to continue this story, because plenty of people like it, and because I know it will anger you. If you don't like this story, then DON'T READ IT! Thank you.**

Go check out EasternWolf23! She's got an awesome Hobbit fanfic in progress!

Expect in this super-long chapter: The Company takes a break, Beorn delivers warning of more evil at work, Lydia begins to suspect the ring she found, Bifur has a chat with his cousin, and Bofur finally makes a decision.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

Things you need to know

_ "Lydia/other Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 15

All she heard was a loud buzzing sound. Irritated, Lydia waved her arm around her head, grumbling in Fili and Kili's general direction. She had no idea why they were making that buzzing sound, or exactly how, but it was happening and it was very annoying. However, when she felt a sharp sting on her hand, she awoke with a yelp, sitting upright quickly and clutching her hand to her chest, staring in shock at the giant, irritated bee buzzing in front of her. The bee flew off, buzzing angrily, and Lydia slowly drew herself to her feet, letting everything come back to her.

Last night, the Company, battered and exhausted, had finally arrived on Beorn's land. The massive skin-changer had greeted the Ur family warmly, and had shown more tolerance and care towards the dragons than any other person in Middle Earth ever would. At Bofur's insistence, the man had agreed to provide temporary shelter for them before they continued on their quest. Several people had simply collapsed on the ground in Beorn's barn, while others had managed to make it into the skin-changers home. Apparently, there was something Beorn had wanted to discuss with the royal family, but decided to wait until they were all more aware.

Now, as Lydia staggered from the room, she heard the skin-changer's gravelly voice pipe up, "Daughter of Erebor, come. Your family kindly set aside food for you to eat when you woke." Lydia nodded mutely and shuffled after the massive skin-changer. Set aside on the table was a plate of bread and fruit. Lydia wasn't about to complain. She was starving.

"Uh, Beorn? Didn't you say something about a looming threat last night?" Lydia asked as she plucked an apple off her plate and started eating it. She watched him with honest curiosity as he hesitated. A pit developed in her stomach as her mind automatically jumped to the worst conclusions, but she forced herself to dismiss those conclusions, because over half the time they were wrong.

"I had simply wished to deliver a warning. Darkness closes in on all, looming on the horizon and threatening to destroy everything. Sauron is still out there. He can never be fully destroyed. Be cautious; this darkness is his doing. Also, a century has past, and the White Tunnel Death* will be born very soon. Beware," Beorn stated, and Lydia nodded in understanding. The White Tunnel Death was the scourge of Middle Earth, besides Sauron anyway. It was a nearly indestructible dragon that ate everything, had no weakness, and stopped for nothing. Thankfully, it had a very short lifespan, and was only born every hundred years. "Now, the others are outside. Go, rest, enjoy the day," the giant man advised, and Lydia nodded, smiling slightly before exiting Beorn's house.

The Vikings were nowhere to be found, but the first thing that really drew Lydia's attention was the fight that was about to break out between Nori and Dwalin. Bofur was hovering nearby, wringing her hands worriedly and shooting nervous glances between the two. Bifur stood at his cousin's side, less concerned over the fight and more concerned for his cousin's mental health, and Bombur hovering behind the two.

"What in Mahal's name is this?" Lydia muttered to Ori as she stepped up to the scribe. He looked like he wasn't sure what to do as the brother he idolized picked a fight with the warrior he idolized. Ori hesitated, unable to tear his eyes away from the brewing fight, but wanting to answer the princess's question. Finally, he looked away from the fight and met Lydia's ice gaze with his own hazel eyes.

"Well, not sure if you knew this, but Dwalin and Nori both are interested in Bofur. Apparently, Mister Dwalin had already given Bofur an offer in secret some time ago, so when Nori made a public offer, Mister Dwalin challenged his right and ability to court and provide for Bofur. It's starting to look like they're going to have a duel," Ori admitted fretfully. He loved his older brother and wanted him to be happy, but Mister Dwalin had made some excellent points, and was the smarter option for Bofur.

Lydia simply sighed and shook her head. If those two idiots decided to have a duel for Bofur, she knew for a fact the toymaker would not be impressed. Bofur had yet to make up her mind on who exactly she had feelings for, and was also quite satisfied with the rights she had when Bilba had gotten some of the old laws overturned. As far as she knew, there had been no duels over a woman in nearly a decade. Bofur had a choice in all this, and if the two dueled, they'd probably both ruin whatever chance they had with Bofur. As Nori threw the first punch, Lydia finally decided no one else was going to do anything, so she stepped up.

"Hey, you idiots, knock it off!" The response was instantaneous. Nori and Dwalin broke apart, though Dwalin looked slightly murderous, and the two stared at Lydia impatiently, eager to get back to their fistfight. However, if the princess wanted their attention, they

would listen. "Since the two of you both wish to court Bofur, don't you think it should kind of be her choice who she accepts?" Lydia asked, hands on her hips and an eyebrow raised. The two Ereborians paused, seeming to think hard on this, before automatically glancing towards where they'd last seen Bofur. The two finally seemed to realize what exactly they had done as where Bofur and Bifur had stood, now only Bombur stood there, shrugging apologetically.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"Damn it!" Bofur screamed, chucking a rock at a tree as hard as she could. It was ridiculous, complete and utter nonsense. Everything made sense now, all the fighting between the warrior and the thief, the random gifts, the subtle hints, everything. They had been competing for her all along. She didn't like that. This wasn't Erebor, and it wasn't last decade, she should be the one to choose who she wanted to be courted by, and no doubt those two idiots were having a duel right now.

That aside, there just wasn't time for something like this. They were on a mission to reach Erebor before Alvin and his Outcasts, a mission they could die in the process of considering they'd have to do something about Smaug, too, and he wasn't overly generous. She just felt...conflicted. So, so conflicted about the whole thing. Finally, Bofur just plopped down on the ground and cradled her head in her hands. This wasn't her thing. She was just a simple toymaker. Life, things shouldn't be like this. Everything had gone wrong after her fiancÃ© died. They shouldn't have stayed in Erebor after that, they should have gone back to Ered Luin. If they had, none of this would have happened. She never would have met Dwalin, and maybe wouldn't have even met Nori.

"Cousin. This fighting cannot go on. You must not allow it to. Make a decision Bofur. Either reject the both, or accept one of them," Bifur spoke as he sat down next to his cousin in the little clearing. He placed a gentle hand on her shoulder and patted it soothingly. Despite that, he saw his cousin's hands tighten their grip on her dark locks, and he sighed. "You do not know what to do. You don't want to reject them both, but you're unsure who to accept," he commented. Bofur nodded at his observation, and Bifur sighed again. He worried about Bofur sometimes (all the time). He had helped raise her and Bombur both. He just wanted them to be happy.

"I really have no idea what to do, Bifur. I think I might have feelings for them both but I just don't know. What if I have feelings for neither of them? I don't want to hurt them. Dwalin is always really nice to me, and Nori has been my friend since the day we met. What do I do?" Bofur asked, rubbing furiously at her eyes, and Bifur stifled yet another sigh. He wasn't sure, and he couldn't very well tell Bofur that. He did have experience with love, but he'd never acted on it, and had had to give up the woman of his dreams for his family, who needed him more than anything or anyone ever could. He did not doubt his love had died when Smaug came. Of course, he couldn't tell Bofur that. He'd made sure to keep it all very secret.

"Come on, then. I'll talk you through this," Bifur assured, and Bofur nodded glumly. She obviously thought it wouldn't help. "You said Dwalin is always nice to you. Let's start with that. Describe how you feel about Dwalin. Tell me how his kindness affects

you." -

"Well, at first it confused me. I thought he was just being nice because he felt guilty about trying to kill me when we first met. But he went out of his way to save my life a couple times, and if he was just trying to make himself feel less guilty, that should have been that, he should have stopped trying to be nice long ago. He'd get some extra stew for me when we travelled, and before we met up with the Brothers Ri and then took to piracy, it was always Dwalin who had my back and that just made me so happy...But we're also very different and we fought with each other just as often as we got into real fights with Wargs or Runners," Bofur admitted, and Bifur nodded.

"What about Nori?" -

"Nori...Nori is my best friend. After the deal went south and we decided to stay in Erebor, it was Nori who taught me how to live. He showed me that just because I was a girl, I didn't have to bend to my parents whims, and that it was okay to take risks. He also drives me out of my mind with worry, he would always disappear for days, sometimes months on end, and I was terrified he wouldn't come back, but he always did, and he always brought me these trinkets and he'd be so charming...I just don't know Bifur, how does talking about these things help me?" Bofur asked, looking to her cousin with pleading eyes. She was kind of lost, but the answer she was seeking was just on the horizon, beyond a mountain, all she had to do was accept it.

"You know, don't you Bofur? You do have feelings for both, but your feelings for one are stronger. Look into your heart and accept it. Whoever you choose, the other will understand, they want you to be happy, and Bombur and I will stand by you. Accept it," Bifur advised. They both fell silent. Bifur watching carefully as Bofur mulled over his words, face set in concentration, and then suddenly she lit up with a huge smile, leaping to her feet and racing off, calling thanks over her shoulder as she went, and Bifur smiled, because Bofur had her answer and was happy with it.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

Lydia sat with her chin on her fist, watching idly as Snotlout wrestled with Tuffnut. "I still can't believe Nori and Dwalin were being such idiots about Bofur," Astrid remarked as she sat down beside Lydia, her gaze also drawn to the wrestling match between the two boys. "Things like that don't really happen on Berk. The feelings are completely mutual, and anyone else who likes that girl or guy makes several attempts but ultimately steps down in the end," Astrid continued, and Lydia smirked.

"Really? Ruffnut told me about how Snotlout can't take a hint when you shoot him down. Anyway, things used to be really traditional in Erebor. Women were seen as property. If a poor man had a beautiful daughter, he could either sell her to be a servant to someone rich for a lot of money, or marry her into a rich family. Love had nothing to do with it for a very long time, until my mam got the old laws overturned and suddenly women were free and independent. Some people still want to cling to the old ways, but Dwalin and Nori usually don't. It was probably just a momentary lapse in judgment. My 'adad always said love makes people crazy," Lydia replied. Then she sighed

and, on an impulse, reached into her pocket and was surprised to feel the smooth surface of a ring. She'd forgotten about it.

Now she pulled it out of her pocket and studied it. "Where'd that come from?" Astrid asked as she leaned over for a closer look at it. Lydia held it up to the sun, turning it this way and that. It just looked like a plain, cheap gold band, a worthless trinket. So why did she get the feeling there was something...wrong, with it?

"I found it in the lowest tunnels of Goblin Town. I'm...almost afraid of what it might be, what finding this might mean," Lydia admitted. At Astrid's questioning look, she continued, "I know no one has told you of the old tales. My parents were told to keep you safe. They are trying to keep you safe from the legends, too. I think you all could handle it, though. And Beorn made a good point earlier. Darkness is rising again. In a nutshell, the legend is that the dark lord of Mordor, Sauron, made nine rings for the main dwellers of Middle Earth, all doomed to die, three for the beautiful lords of the woods, such as Elrond, seven for the sturdy but greedy lords of Erebor, and one ring for himself, one ring to rule them all."

"And, you think this is that ring?" Astrid asked, bewildered. How could plain little rings cause trouble like Lydia was describing?

"I don't know. It could be any of the rings of power. Since the people of Goblin Town were once of Erebor, it's most likely not Sauron's ring. I know many of the rings Sauron gifted my ancestors were destroyed, but it's known for sure that at least two survive. The Firebeards hid there's away, and my great-grandfather, Thror, was known to have the one belonging to the Longbeards, before he disappeared. I'd rather not tell anyone I had this yet, just to be safe, though," Lydia said with a shrug.

"Is there anyway to know for sure what ring it is?"

Lydia hesitated. "They all gave the wearer an ability, but I don't know what each ability is to each ring. I'm...almost afraid to put this ring on. Those seven rings did horrible, horrible things. Even the most pure-hearted can be corrupted by the powers any of those rings offered. And, my people are known throughout Middle Earth for our greed and gold lust. It...is a sickness known to especially infect Durin's line," Lydia admitted. She stared at the ring resting so innocently on the palm of her hand. This ring and others like it were the stuff of nightmares, tales told to warn kids of the past, and also inspire them to be generous. However, they weren't just scary tales to tell little kids. It was all very real.

"Well, if it gives powers, we should at least know what power this one has. It could be useful on this quest," Astrid pointed out, and Lydia nodded hesitantly. Astrid had a point. So, taking a deep, steadyng breath, Lydia slipped the ring on her finger. The response was instantaneous. The world immediately became dull and lifeless, the colors muted and sound muffled, like she was trapped in some kind of nightmare. Astrid gave a small yelp of alarm, but quickly shut her mouth when her fellow Vikings gave her a questioning look. She smiled sheepishly and waved them off. Only when Lydia was sure they had turned away did she take the ring off, gasping as the world suddenly became more vibrant. "What just happened? Where'd you go?" Astrid hissed, and Lydia smiled faintly.

"The ring makes you invisible."

* * *

><p>Yep. Lydia now knows what the ring does.</p>

And, yes, Bofur did make a decision, but that doesn't mean I'm going to tell you what it is! Maybe next chapter. (Yes, next chapter.)

*The White Tunnel Death is the Screaming Death. The name is kind of self-explanatory there.

Anyway, since I ranted at the top about stupid people, right here and now I would like to give a big thank you to everyone, anonymous and registered, who have been kind enough to leave a review! You guys rock! I'll give a proper shout-out when I finish this story! Don't worry; next chapter will be much faster!

Review please!

16. Chapter 16

I'm baack! Did you miss me? Of course you did! Look though, it's a faster update, and I think we might be maybe halfway through this story? Maybe a little more? Eh, whatever. Still awesome. Also. I seem to have not made this clear enough, so I'll say it now and add it to the warnings. STORY: MAJOR AU. That is all.

Victor: Thank you, thank you for your continued support. Sorry, but the poll has spoken, Dwalin has won (you'll see a bit of that this chapter). And yes I did see the second Dragons movie! I loved it! It made me laugh and (almost) cry. I don't think I'll be incorporating any of the movie into this story though. Let's just pretend all those events will happen after the end of this story!

**Flamers: **This. Is. An. AU. It is also fanfiction. Therefore I can do whatever I want with my story! So no matter what you do, no matter what you say, this story is going all the way to the end, and it's NEVER going away! Honestly, if you don't like the story, fine, I'm not trying to make you. Just don't read it, if you hate it that much. Plenty of others like it. I will not address this again.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

MAJOR AU

DON'T LIKE, DON'T READ!

Things you need to know

_ "Erebilians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 16

The departure from Beorn's was a somber affair. At the break of dawn they loaded their supplies equally divided onto the backs of their dragons, bade Beorn a goodbye, and took to the skies as the sun rose over the horizon. Every downstroke of the dragon's wings carried them all closer and closer to Erebor, farther from the relative safety of the skinchanger's house and towards their own home.

It was a short flight before the Greenwood came into sight. Only, it was not what they remembered it as. The leaves of the treetops were orange with the colors of fall, and now so dense that the forest floor was out of sight. The air was still, and the easy camaraderie among the Company was silenced, no one daring to utter a word or make a sound as they flew over what had become, as Elrond said, Mirkwood. "Darkness grows. What happened while we were gone?" Frodo wondered, gaze somber as he looked over the forest that was once so beautiful, even though no Ereborian alive would admit it.

"Mahal save us. Is this...Sauron's power?" Bofur marvelled, subconsciously urging her dragon to fly a little lower, closer to the trees. Dwalin, sitting behind the toy maker on her Nadder, reached around and steered the dragon back higher into the sky. The forest made him uneasy. Bofur startled, unaware she'd done that, but gave a secret smile and gently patted Dwalin's hand. If she had glanced, she would of seen the glare Nori shot at Dwalin. When, to everyone's surprise, Bofur had tentatively invited Dwalin to fly with her earlier that morning, it had been as good an answer as anyone had needed. Bofur had chosen Dwalin. There was much grumbling all around as gold was passed from hand to hand, many people had taken wagers in Nori's favor and were not too pleased to be losing that gold.

Ori couldn't help but give his older brother sympathetic looks all day. He knew how much Nori cared about Bofur. Now he was dismayed to see the thief slowly shutting down, putting that mask back in place, trying to block out the world and ignore the pain he would always deny feeling. Even Dori had backed off, he ceased to hassle Nori about his lifestyle and everything he ever did. Dori seemed absolutely helpless to support Nori right now, and Ori knew if he tried to bring it up, Nori would just laugh it off. Even if Nori was the type to share his feelings, he'd never share with his brothers.

"Bofur, keep up. We must not linger here, and will not wait for you," Tharin called back, and Bofur urged her Deadly Nadder to fly faster. Everyone knew they were impossibly close, so all day they flew hard towards the mountain, hoping to be done flying over Mirkwood before night fell. A stream of spotted, light and quiet chatter was kept throughout the day, but everyone was wary, since they could all see

the darkness that seemed to coil around and envelop a far corner of Mirkwood, as though that was the center of the evil. If memory served, that was the corner where the ruins of Dol Guldur resided.

"How long until we reach the mountain?" Hiccup had asked at one point, asking the question that loomed heavy in the back of everyone's mind. Balin and Thorin debated the question in Khuzdul for a moment, having no true time-frame they could tell the Viking teen, before Balin finally came to a decision, even if Thorin was being stubborn and refused to admit to anything.

"I believe if we fly through the night, we can reach the mountain by midday tomorrow. If luck is on our side, we may encounter no troubles with the men of Lake-Town, or if luck is against us, we will all be shot down and never reach the mountain. Hard to determine with the men living there," Balin admitted. It was probably a point of worry for Thorin. Some of the men (most of them) had once lived in Dale, and were no friends to the people of Erebor, not any longer. The men of Dale and Lake-Town had blamed Erebor for the troubles they had now, had chased them off years ago, and likely wouldn't welcome them back now.

"Shoot us down? What? Why?" Tuffnut asked, bewildered.

"The men of Lake-Town blamed us for the dragon's coming, and for Dale's destruction. They did not forgive the line of Durin, and it's unlikely they'll be happy to see us," Bilbo explained. This simple sentence left the Vikings with a lot to reflect on. The people of Erebor didn't have any way of knowing that hoarding gold within a mountain would draw the attention of a Great Dragon. If what the Ereborians had said was true, many, if not all, people had believed no Great Dragons still lived in Middle Earth.

"You know, if we stop before we reach Lake-Town, wait, and then fly past during the night, we might not be spotted at all," Lydia suggested.

"That will take too long! We must not delay! We must hurry to the mountain and reach Erebor before the Outcasts arrive. Smaug has to be gone by the time Alvin and his Outcasts reach us," Thorin snarled, and Lydia subsided with a grumble. She couldn't help but wonder how exactly they were going to defeat Alvin and the Outcasts, considering there weren't many of them, and they also had to consider they could lose what few people they had when going up against the Great Dragon.

So they flew onward. In all honesty, flying was quite boring. Ruff and Tuff were playing a game called "I Spy" for a while, but soon grew bored with that. Idle chatter flew between the Ereborians and the Vikings, but there was nothing of much interest. They flew at a steady pace all day, only stopping briefly after reaching the end of Mirkwood to eat some fruit and bread that Beorn had given them while Lydia's Cauldron splashed around in the water for a short time before they flew on towards Lake-Town.

The sun was setting as Lake-Town finally came into view, the lake turning red with the blazing light of the sun. At this point, Thorin started urging them to fly faster, wanting to fly past Lake-Town as quick as they could to hopefully avoid being spotted. It was not to

be. The Company could faintly hear shouting from below. That was all the warning they got before arrows whistled through the air, and Bofur's Nadder had to do some fancy flying to avoid a boulder fired from a catapult. "Fly! Fly to the mountain! Quickly!" Thorin roared, and the riders urged their dragons to go faster.

"Scatter! We're too big of a target!" Astrid shouted, and for once no one argued, simply did as the Viking advised. The dragons separated, all flying off in different directions. Only one dragon went down, but no one noticed this until they had finally managed to regroup a good distance away from Lake-Town, about a fourth of the distance to the mountain covered, the riders and their dragons hovering over the water, watching each other and making sure everyone was present.

"Where's Ori?!" Dori exclaimed frantically, looking around for his littlest brother. Ori, after giving Dori the puppy eyes, had been flying with Nori on the back of a Monstrous Nightmare. Now both of the younger Ri brothers were nowhere to be found. "Oh Mahal! Someone must have shot them down!" Dori exclaimed, wringing his hands together nervously, eyes flickering around, debating turning back to retrieve his brothers.

"Dori, we cannot linger! Nori and Ori will be fine! We are going to the mountain and your strength is needed. We must press on," Thorin interrupted, his eyes blazing. Everyone shuddered at the look in his eyes. It wasn't quite madness, but it wasn't the look of someone who was completely in their right mind either. "Let's go. You do not want to be left behind," Thorin stated, and then turned and urged his dragon to fly towards the mountain. They all reluctantly moved on, sharing uneasy glances, but no one dared speak against the King, not even his own family. All was silent as they flew across the Devastation, past the ruined and skeletal city of Dale, and then over the next rocky ride, it appeared, the great doors of their ancestors, now sealed, and a hush fell over the party.

"There it is," Lydia breathed as she peered around Frerin's massive head, finally breaking the silence.. The dragon gave a low rumble, as though sensing the importance it held for his rider, and as Frodo looked around his sister's shoulder, he felt like his heart had stopped. Though they had both been young when their kingdom fell, their minds had perfectly preserved the eternal beauty of the Lonely Mountain. It stood tall, proud, and solitary, looking over the Long Lake like a sentry guarding its people.

Everyone seemed to be in awe of the beauty of Erebor, staring at the mountain, at their home. "Bofur, lead us to this door," Thorin called, and the purple Deadly Nadder Bofur rode shot to the front of their procession, Dwalin clinging desperately to her waist as the Nadder took a dive to the side of the mountain, bypassing the stone soldiers of their kin of yore. As Frerin soared past, Lydia and Frodo looked sadly at the great stone giants. For eleven long years the statues had kept their lonely vigil, their axes clasped firmly in their grasp to keep any with evil intent from entering Erebor. Eleven years without care, and the guardians of the kingdom were slowly crumbling away. Unfortunately, stone did not last forever.

Lydia followed closely and landed by the Hidden Door. If they hadn't mapped it and didn't know it was there, they would never have seen the keyhole, and would have remained unable to enter Erebor. All eyes

were on Thorin as he stepped forward with the iron key. The King looked around, meeting eyes with each and every person, his blue eyes telling stories of what could happen after this. Then, he slid the key into the keyhole. It was very anticlimactic, and then they all held their breath. For a moment, it seemed the key didn't work, but then, with a click and a rumble, Thorin pushed the stone door aside, and they were in.

A wave of air, smelling strongly of rotten flesh and ash, rushed forward to greet them, smacking them in the face with a low moan. "We're in," Fili marveled, voice reverent and eyes shining.

"Alright. Then, you guys should probably wait out here. I'll approach Smaug," Hiccup stated, looking even to his fellow Vikings as he said it. He turned, taking a deep breath, and started walking into the mountain. Toothless padded after him happily, but Hiccup turned to him. "No bud. Stay here," Hiccup instructed. Toothless slouched, giving Hiccup a sad look that Hiccup had to force himself to ignore. The other Vikings exchanged a glance as Hiccup disappeared into the dark hall of the mountain, and then followed him. Balin followed, undoubtedly to give them advice.

Lydia hesitated for a few moments, and then sprinted after them. She arrived just in time to hear the tail end of Balin's speech, "If things start to look bad and you feel like you'd have to kill or fight Smaug, he has a spot on his chest, a scale knocked off. It's his only weak point. Good luck." Then the old advisor gave a knowing smile as he passed her before retreating from the mountain.

Lydia took a deep breath, and then stepped forward so that the Vikings could see her. They looked shocked when they noticed her, but waited patiently for her to speak.

"I want you all to know how much this means to us. But, I won't lie to you. This is probably the most dangerous thing you'll ever do in your lives. A word of advice: when you're down there, Smaug will be awake. I recommend that all of you do not show yourselves. Only three or four of you maybe. When you get down there, Smaug will be intrigued. He's not smelled a Viking before. That will quickly wear off. That's why, before it does, you must challenge him to a game of riddles. Smaug's a Great Dragon, you see, and Great Dragons are clever, clever enough to talk and Smaug is excellent at riddles. If you can best him at his game, he'll let you live. Only the cleverest of you must challenge him. He will let you all work together, as he is very vain and will likely consider it 'evening the playing fields.' Use that to your advantage. However, which of you is not participating in the game, I have a favor to ask. There is a gem there, a jewel that glows from within. It is the Arkenstone, heart of Erebor, impossible to miss. Find it, and bring it to us. When in the hands of the King Under the Mountain, it has special qualities, if nothing else, makes him rightful King once more so the people would have no choice except to follow him. Find the Arkenstone, and bring it to my 'adad. Good luck, and please, for the love of Mahal, be careful," Lydia stated, and then she too disappeared into the shadows.

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

They had agreed Ruff, Tuff, and Snotlout would be searching for the

Arkenstone while Fishlegs, Astrid, and Hiccup challenged Smaug to the game. Hiccup stopped right in the doorway to the treasury, eyes wide in wonder. Lydia hadn't been lying. Gold piles as tall as the ceiling greeted them, shimmering in the dim light and seeming to be alive and moving like a river of gold. As the Vikings tentatively entered the room, they realized that the gold piles were indeed moving, shifting from below, and then the great beast himself rose from the piles, massive wings stretching across the room, gold dislodged from his scales and clinking against other gold pieces like chiming bells, and then the massive head swung around towards them.

"I smell you. Six intruders, entering my mountain. Have you come for my gold?" The dragon's voice was a low rumble, but hypnotizing at the same time. All six of them, caught, had no choice except to step into Smaug's line of sight.

"No, your greatness. We've come from across the oceans to see you in all your glory," Hiccup replied. Balin had advised they speak politely to the dragon. It would be unwise to anger him at this point, considering he could, and probably would, fry them in the blink of an eye.

"Really now? Is that why you smell of salt, of far-away lands that not even I have encountered in my many, many long years of life?" Smaug growled, inhaling deeply as he said it. Lydia had warned of this. Soon they would pose the question of a riddle game.

"Of course. We are Vikings, from Berk. We've heard tell of your magnificent talents with riddles, and have come to ask for a game, to have the honor of exchanging riddles and seeing your magnificence before the end of our lives," Astrid spoke up, tripping slightly over her words as she stared up into Smaug's amber eyes.

"Riddles, hm? And what would you ask of me, should you win?" Smaug asked, lowering his head closer to them. The Vikings fought the urge to recoil at the reek of death on the dragon's breath. Smaug inhaled deeply again, and then his eyes seemed to widen. He pulled back slightly.

"Tell me, why do you reek of Erebor, if you have never been here before?" Smaug asked instead of waiting for an answer to his first question. His look was guarded, and Hiccup felt his heart stop beating in his chest momentarily, but then, praise the gods above, Snotlout was quick on his feet. It was actually quite impressive, as Snotlout was normally quite rude, but managed to pose a logical question that would appease the dragon.

"Aren't we **in **Erebor, your greatness?" Snotlout asked. His tone was not haughty or sarcastic. He seemed to be asking an honest question. Smaug hummed and withdrew from their space, shifting and pacing slightly around the room.

"Your point is valid. Very well. Riddles it is. Let the games begin."

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

Lydia paced, and paced, and paced. Back and forth, dodge Bofur, forth and back, dodge Dwalin, don't fall over the edge, repeat. It felt like hours since the Vikings had entered Erebor, and if there were

multiple people searching, they should have found the Arkenstone by now! She hadn't been lying when she said it was impossible to miss, because it was! Lydia had only ever seen the Heart of Erebor once in her life, and she could never forget it. The way it sat above the King's throne, glittering so beautifully.

So enchanting to anyone who gazed upon it, but the Arkenstone was so much more than just beauty. It was the Heart of the Lonely Mountain, it was the King's jewel. To hold the Arkenstone was to hold Erebor in the palm of your hands, to own Erebor, to rule the great kingdom of Durin's folk. The Arkenstone was power, a power that all of Middle Earth sought to claim as their own. But it would never belong to anyone else. It would always be Durin's.

Lydia could remember the one time she'd seen the Arkenstone. She'd gotten to hold it. 'Adad had picked her up in his arms, set her on his lap, and cupped her hands for her, supporting her much smaller hands as the Heart of the Mountain was placed in them. He'd been named King only recently. She could remember as her grandfather, Thrain, who had recently stepped down, gently placed the stone in her hands, and they were both smiling at her. She remembered marveling at the warmth of the stone; the way it felt like it pulsed with life.

In that moment, it was like she was connected to the spirit of Erebor, connected to the mountain and all of the people in it. She felt connected to everyoneâ€¦

Lydia was jolted out of her thoughts when the mountain rumbled, the ground shaking beneath their feet. "Was that an earthquake?" Oin cried as he staggered to his feet, looking around wildly. He'd been dozing off, and all he felt was the ground rumbling, jolting him back to wakefulness and leaving him disoriented. He put his trumpet to his ear, awaiting a response from someone.

"That, my lad, was a dragon. A Great Dragon," Balin supplied somberly. Lydia stared intently at the entrance to Erebor as the trembling eased and ceased. There was the possibility that this entrance could collapse as well. If that happened, they'd never get the Arkenstone, nor would they be able to defeat Smaug.

Cautiously, discreetly, Lydia glanced around. No one was paying attention to her, or the entrance, they were all clustering around Thorin. With one last glance at her friends and family, Lydia sprinted into the mountain as quietly as any full-blood Shireling. "Lydia!" she heard Frodo scream, but she didn't look back, she just disappeared into the mountain.

Her feet still knew the paths, even if her mind did not. Always in Erebor her feet knew where to go, or where she needed to go anyway, and Lydia paused before the treasury, taking a deep, steadyng breath, before she slipped on the ring. The colors were gone, the world was faded, and sound was distorted, but she felt a little safer now. It was a nifty little trinket, this ring, because it allowed her to turn invisible, and she loved it. No one would know where she was, and Smaug would be so busy with the Vikings, she could look for the Arkenstone herself.

Taking one more deep breath, Lydia stepped into the treasury, and was immediately in awe of the piles of golden arching towards the

ceiling, filling the massive room. She'd nearly forgotten this beauty and splendor of her family's wealth. It was beautiful, wonderful, and for a moment there were stars in her eyes. Then she shook her head and prowled further into the room, gently placing her feet on the loose gold, skirting the dragon and the six Vikings still playing riddles with him.

"Up, up, up it goes, yet never grows," she heard Smaug growl. The Vikings muttered amongst themselves for a moment, and then Tuffnut replied confidently,

"The mountain."

"Correct," Smaug sighed and growled at the same time, curling around one of the stone, carved and decorative support beams of the mountain. "Very well. Give another riddle," Smaug said, and Lydia finally tuned them out and walked quietly around the treasury. Smaug was obviously becoming quite irritated with the fact that the Vikings hadn't lost the game yet.

Smaug growled again, and Lydia flinched, risking a glance towards the players. Smaug was stumped by whatever riddle Ruffnut had proudly delivered, and as Smaug shifted again, Lydia's eyes lit up as her gaze fell upon the glimmering white-blue gem peeking out from amongst the piles of gold a few feet away from her. It seemed to call for her, and she threw caution to the wind, racing as fast as she possibly could. She fell to her knees beside it, and carefully, quietly, scooped the Arkenstone up into her hands, cradling it, smiling softly at the glowing gem that was warm and cool at the same time. It was just as she remembered.

Then she stuck the gem in her pocket and made for the exit. She had to get to Thorin, had to give him the King's jewel; it was rightfully his, after all.

"The Arkenstone," Smaug growled, and Lydia froze, fearing he'd seen her with it, even though it was impossible since she was invisible. "You have not been here before, so why do you know of the Arkenstone? You have come to steal it from me; you've come and offered your aid to those wretched, cold-hearted, greedy Ereborians." It must have been the answer to the riddle. Smaug rumbled, and Lydia decided she wasn't going to take any chances, bolting for the exit to return the Arkenstone to her 'adad.

Smaug inhaled deeply, and his eyes flared as he caught a fresh whiff of living Ereborian flesh. His head snapped to where he'd last seen the gem, and howled when he saw it gone, "Thief! Lying, treacherous, greedy Ereborian thief!" Following his nose, Smaug scrambled across the gold after Lydia.

Lydia bolted from the treasury and shot off down the stone halls of her ancestors, even as Smaug crashed through the doors behind her. Lydia fought back a scream as she ran as quietly as possible, knowing and taking comfort from the fact that Smaug only knew where she was by hearing and smell. Lydia ducked into a small passage just as a stream of fire shot past her. Lydia let out a squeak and hurried off down the small corridor. She had to get back to the entrance! Hopefully the Vikings had gotten out while they could, have raced to the entrance, and the others would be coming after her soon.

"Hey ugly!" a voice echoed down the corridors, reaching Lydia's ears, and the Ereborian princess froze. That was Snotlout's voice! What in Mahal's name was he doing? "Can't catch me you overgrown Fireworm!" Snotlout shouted, and Smaug's roar of rage echoed all throughout the mountain, forcing Lydia's to cover her ears at the way it echoed. Snotlout's scream bounced off the walls in a similar way, and after much sounds of scrambling and Smaug's razor claws raced away from her, Lydia dared to peer out the corridor. Nothing and no one was in sight, and so finally she raced towards the Hidden Door, taking off her ring and pocketing it as she was finally met with fresh air.

Everyone was gone. Only Frerin stood there, waiting for her. With a sigh of irritation, Lydia placed her ring back on her thumb and dashed back into Erebor, Frerin lumbering after her, following by smell.

* * *

><p>Wow long chapter. I got a little carried away there. See, I was going to end it at the point after everyone realized Nori and Ori were missing, but that would be mean, so I ended here. Is that mean too?:)</p>

Anyone, I'm sorry to inform you all that I go back to school on Monday, so updates will be few and far between once more. At least I don't really have writer's block anymore, so I can keep working on the chapters. Um, yeah, I don't know when you'll get the next chapter...sorry?

Anyway, review!

17. Chapter 17

I'm back! Sorry for the delay. I've been a bit busy trying to get caught up on all nine seasons of Supernatural, which I did by the way, and I've been watching season 10. So um...this chapter...yeah. Remember when I said, waayyy back in chapter 2, that Merry and Pippin would be in this as twins? Well, here they are! This story had run away from me, but now I have it back under control. So, I'd say there are going to be a few more chapters, but I promise it'll be NO MORE than ten. Okay, onward!

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

MAJOR AU

DON'T LIKE, DON'T READ!

Things you need to know

_ "Erebilians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 17

When Nori came to, he glanced around, shaking his head with a quiet groan of pain. He brought his hand to his forehead and was surprised to see it was covered in muck. Alarm bells immediately rang in his head, and the thief quickly took stock of his surroundings. Mountains of trash containing rotten food and splintered wood surrounded him. He'd landed in a garbage pile. Wonderful. "Gross," Nori complained, slowly dragging himself to his feet, shaking the trash from his shoulders and wanting nothing more than to scrub the indeterminate something from the back of his hands.

Before he had time to further analyze the situation, he heard footsteps approaching. Years of ducking and dodging the law after committing some illegal crime had him instinctively looking for an escape route. He found his route in the form of a rickety wooden patio in the nearest building. With all the silence of a professional thief, Nori stole across the short expanse of ground, swinging up to the patio, smiling smugly when he discovered the door was not locked. He winced at the squeak that escaped the door as he swung it open and slipped inside, slowly and silently closing the door behind him until only a tiny unnoticeable sliver remained open so that he could see what was going on and maybe pick up a few words of what was being said.

"I swore I saw someone land over here!" he heard a voice complain rather loudly. Then two soldiers came into view. One had a look of dismay on his face while the other was scowling fiercely. The younger one continued to frantically search the area Nori had recently vacated. "Look, see the imprint in the trash, someone was here!" the younger soldier insisted, and the elder just rolled his eyes.

"Aye, lad, probably someone was lying down to sleep. Come on, we've caught the one lad who was on the dragon, and the Nightmare has been caged. Let's head back. Our shift guarding the prisoners is about to start." Then the two guards quickly left the area and Nori waited a few moments before sliding back out of the house and quietly tailed the guards. He knew they were talking about his brother, and once he got Ori back they would find the Monstrous Nightmare the Vikings had given him and get to Erebor. He was anxious about his friends being in the mountain with a dragon; he couldn't know what was going on, and that bothered him. At this point it was quite clear Thorin had moved the Company along, and Nori was determined to get to his friends and family.

The people of Lake-Town were starving and scared, which made them unobservant. No one noticed a shadow of a man slide past them, too content to keep their heads down and stay absorbed only in their own lives. It was kind of sad, but Nori didn't allow himself to dwell on it, nor pity the people, for they had thrown the Erebilians aside and blamed them for the coming of Smaug. It made his blood burn, knowing

so many people had wandered lost and starving and homeless. It was also that time when Dwalin and Bofur grew close, and his chances were ruined before he even knew it. If Lake-Town had offered shelter...

The past was the past, though, and Nori tried not to dwell on it. Bofur was happy and that was all that mattered. He'd seen how Dwalin acted towards her; he was good for her. He'd never get over it, of that Nori was certain, but he could be happy for her. Nori found he had to physically shake himself to return to reality. Eyes narrowed, he rounded a final corner, and smirked. The soldiers had led him right to the prison.

The thief ducked further into the shadows and watched as the guards he had followed swapped positions with the two already there. The other two guards disappeared, and the first two guards took up positions standing at attention in front of the door. Nori studied the prison. It was a squat building, made of dull, gray weathered stone and high, unbarred open windows that, for anyone else, would have been impossible to access. Not for him. Taking a moment to pull his hood over his hair, Nori strode out of the shadows, head ducked as he moved past the guards. They didn't even glance twice at him, paying more attention to each other as they argued. Nori slipped past the front door of the prison without any trouble, disappearing from their sight around the side of the building.

Glancing around, Nori studied his surroundings. As far as he could tell, the side of the prison was a large blind spot. A devious smirk stole across his face when he spotted the nearby crates, conveniently under a window. If he took a running start, he could leap up to the window and haul himself in. With a final glance around, Nori took a few steps back, and then dashed towards the low crates, keeping his footsteps light and springing from the crates as though they were tension boards. There was a brief moment where it felt like he was flying, his stomach left behind on his takeoff, and then he felt stone against his palm.

His reaction time was impeccable as he quickly grasped the ledge under his hands. Briefly, he hung there, and then gathered his feet under him, bracing them against the stone wall and hauling himself up over the ledge. He didn't waste time perched on the ledge, simply dropping into the building, crouching into the shadows. Luck was on his side, as there was no one in the immediate vicinity when he entered the prison. That was the one thing that had given him slight pause. Now it was no issue as he stole through the hallways, dodging the occasional guard and steadily searching for his little brother. Finally, he found Ori, in a back hall sitting across from a man Nori faintly remembered.

"Nori!" Ori exclaimed, standing abruptly from the cot in his cell and beaming at his older brother. Nori smirked and withdrew his lock picks. The door was a joke and Nori had it opened in under a minute. Ori embraced his brother and the two quickly bashed foreheads in greeting.

"What, you think I was gonna leave ya here? Nah, Dori would skin me alive. Come on, let's get to Erebor," Nori said, and the two turned to leave, Ori beaming because, despite what Nori said, he knew his elder brother had come back because he loved his family. It was also why he was in a hurry to get to Erebor. The two got along like a

house on fire, but at the end of the day, Dori and Nori were brothers and brothers looked out for each other.

"Nori of Ri. Finally, a name for a face, or should I say hairstyle. I'd always wondered who the Thief King was. You drove Girion half mad in his quest to capture you," the man who was in the cell across from Ori's spoke, and Nori froze. It had been a while since anyone, besides Bofur, but she said it in a joking manner, had called him the Thief King. The only person who had seen him was a teen, thirteen years ago, back when he was just becoming respected in the Underworld.

"Bard. You're Bard ain't you? Girion's lad. Whatever happen to your old man? Can't imagine the Lord in Dale throwing his son in a cell for any reason," Nori said lightly. There was a hint of alarm in his voice, though, as he now realized something was very, very wrong in Lake-Town. Worse than they'd originally thought.

"There's a new master in Lake-Town. He doesn't like me very much, nor does his weasel of a second. They like Ereborians even less than Girion did. Never thought that was possible," Bard snorted, and now the alarm was showing on Nori's face. Sure, Girion hadn't been a fan of Erebor, but at least he had been civil. If this new master hated the people of Erebor more than Girion did, they were in trouble deep.

"Here, Bard, if I let you out, you gonna help us?" Nori questioned skeptically, and Bard reluctantly agreed. Nori hesitated for a few more moments, before finally shrugging and accepting Bard's promise. He unlocked Bard's cell and stepped aside so Bard could join them in the hall. "Time to go. We're getting to that Nightmare and getting out of here," Nori stated quietly, gesturing for Bard and Ori to follow him but remain silent. They slid back out the prison the same way Nori entered with no trouble at all, and then quickly disappeared into the crowds.

The challenge came when trying to get to Nori's dragon. It wasn't too hard to find the pen, but Bard had quite bluntly informed Nori that most people in Lake-Town always insisted on putting the dragons to death. Nori's was the first dragon that had been captured in a long time and it would likely be put to death soon. Nori paled at that. They wouldn't be able to get to Erebor without that dragon!

"Excuse me."

"We couldn't help but overhear."

Nori, Ori, and Bard spun towards the two voices. Behind them stood two small children, wearing over-sized clothes and mischievous grins. They were covered in filth, but their eyes sparkled with light that seemed brighter than all the glittering gold in Erebor. If the three looked close enough, they could tell that the two boys had a mop of honey curls under all the layers of filth. Bard recognized the two after a moment.

"You two! Merry and Pippin!" he exclaimed, but he looked less than happy. Nori and Ori were puzzled, glancing between Bard and the two boys in bewilderment. At Bard's shout, the grin the boys sported seemed to stretch even farther across their faces, if that was at all possible.

"So you," one began.

"Do know us," the other finished. They looked undeniably pleased by this. "As we were saying," the second continued.

"We couldn't help but overhear," the first piped up again.

As one, the two chorused, "We can help you free your dragon."

THIS IS A PAGE BREAK

"Who decided it would be a good idea to listen to these two brats?" Nori groused as they followed Merry and Pippin through a garbage dump. No one responded to Nori's bitching, irritating him even more by their silence. "They're just kids. How can we trust them? How do we know they're not leading us to our doom?" Nori asked, this time prompting a sigh from Ori and making Bard shift uncomfortably. Nori hated relying on others. The fact that Merry and Pippin were leading them somewhere and Nori wasn't in charge just drove the middle Ri brother absolutely crazy.

"Well I guess you'll just have to trust us," Merry said firmly, leaving no room for argument, and Pippin giggled at the look on Nori's face. Nori wasn't used to such a response as the one Merry had given him, and thus he looked as though he'd smelled something particularly foul. Although, that could just be because they were walking through a garbage dump. Even Ori would not hesitate to admit the smell was extremely unpleasant.

"We're almost there, I promise," Pippin piped up innocently, glancing over his shoulder at them with a grin. Ori couldn't help but be a little suspicious of that grin. It was a lot like the grin Fili and Kili would get when they were about to cause chaos and mayhem that ultimately led to a near-death experience at the hand of an enraged Dwalin before Thorin or Bilba would interfere to save their hides. But maybe he was just being a little paranoid. Merry and Pippin seemed like perfectly sweet, helpful young boys. There was no cause for alarm, no need to assume the worst.

"Right then. We're here," Merry stated as they came to a halt outside a small building that was within the garbage dump. "The Master keeps dragons here. He tries to tame them and use them to his own purposes. When that doesn't work, he slaughters them. Most people don't know this is here, because they don't go too far into the dump. They just leave their garbage at the edge," Merry explained. Ori was bewildered by the amount of knowledge Merry seemed to have of this area. The boy seemed a bit too mature for his age, and wasn't that a sad thought? Had he even had time to be a child, or had his life always been like this? Ori wanted to ask, but dare not, unsure how the twins would respond to his questioning.

"Let's get to it, then," Nori snarled, stalking forward and barely hesitating to bust down the door of the squat, ugly building. Ori jumped. That wasn't Nori's usual style, it was more like Dwalin's. Nori preferred to act subtly. Despite his better judgement, Ori hurried after his brother, calling a thanks over his shoulder to Merry and Pippin as he hurried into what was sure to be the lion's den.

Except it wasn't. There was no one within the little building, and a fuming Nori was releasing his Monstrous Nightmare from one of the cages. "Damn. Was hoping to beat up some people to blow off steam," Nori muttered to himself as he tugged the dragon from its cage. "Come on then, Ori. Off to Erebor we go," Nori continued, sounding a little better about it compared to facing an empty dragon jail. Nori led the dragon out of the building and Ori slowly followed, lost in thought. Something didn't add up. Why was there no one guarding this building? Even if no one ever came back here, shouldn't there be someone at least keeping an eye on the dragon. Ori got his answer when he walked back outside.

The building was surrounded by guards. Nori was furious, that much was obvious by his stance, and two guards had Bard by the arms. The man looked less than thrilled and clearly felt he should have slipped away from them before something like this happened. "Well done, boys.Flushed out the other Ereborian quickly. That's well worth a week of free food," a guard said to Merry and Pippin. Ori frowned at the twins. They were practically glowing with pride at the praise the guard offered them.

"See what I mean? This is why we shouldn't have trusted those little brats! I knew something was up! No one is that nice," Nori snarled. The Monstrous Nightmare echoed Nori's growl, but the dragon's was much more intimidating.

"Alright then, you two are coming with us," another guard spoke up, stepping forward. A low, ominous rumble stopped him in his tracks. Everyone turned to stare off into the night sky, eyes falling on the mountain, seeing the smoke rising from the peak and a small speck of light that was coming right towards Lake-Town, and moving rather fast. Nori paled as the guard stepped back and squeaked, "The dragon! Smaug the Terrible! He's coming! Warn the Master! We must get out of here!" Then the guards turned and fled, leaving them there in the garbage dump, staring with horror at the night sky and incoming disaster.

* * *

><p>Ha! You guys don't get to know what happened in Erebor! I was going to keep writing until Smaug burned Lake-Town and Bard killed him, but I decided to cut this chapter off here. Also, since you all kind of know how Bard kills Smaug, I'll be leaving that part out of the story and switching back to Erebor next chapter. Also, next chapter, and pretty much all chapters after this one, will be told mainly through the Viking's eyes. And I'm not cutting some of this stuff because I'm lazy! It's because, as I said, you guys already know that part! No, but I was being lazy about updating. I didn't feel like logging on to post this chapter. I might have had it written for a while...oh well.</p>

Review!

18. Chapter 18

Hey guys, so remember when I said the plot ran away from me? Yeah I had to change the summary because of that. The evil ties into the Screaming Death, the Arkenstone, and hints at Sauron and his evil army. I won't tell you exactly how (mostly because the muse doesn't

tell ME until I write it) but I just thought I should tell you that the plot did run away from my original idea...it needs to stop doing that.

Rated-T

Warnings

Abuse/torture

Some OOC-ness maybe

I might not get all of their talking entirely accurate so please bear with me

MAJOR AU

DON'T LIKE, DON'T READ!

Things you need to know

_ "Ereborians speaking in Khuzdul" _

Disclaimer-I don't own the Hobbit or How To Train Your Dragon.

* * *

><p>Here We Stand United</p>

Chapter 18

The sun rose over the horizon, slowly creeping over the ledge and illuminating six humanoid figures standing there. As the light slowly spread over the land, the full destruction that occurred the night before was laid before them. Ruffnut Thorston worriedly scratched at one of her dragon's heads as she saw the fire on the lake. There were no buildings left; most of them had sunk into the lake and what little was still above water was on fire. Soon, it too would sink beneath the water and all the town's inhabitants would be left with nothing. Well, if anyone survived that is.

"I can't believe Thorin ordered us to stay within the mountain instead of flying off to help the people of Lake-Town," Astrid Hofferson fumed. "And no one said anything to contradict him! Dori didn't even speak up, and his brothers are there!" she continued to rant, pacing back and forth on the ledge overlooking the Desolation.

"I'm sure Thorin had his reasons. I mean, he did promise he would keep us safe, and let's face it, Smaug is different than the Red Death. If we had gone to help, we probably would have just gotten in the way or ended up dead, which is a bit contradictory to keeping us safe," Fishlegs piped up, trying to be helpful, and Ruff had to resist the urge to face-palm because now the brainy Viking was going to be suffering Astrid's wrath. As was her habit, Astrid turned furiously on Fishlegs, and he shrank back, expecting to be hurt, but Hiccup stepped between the two.

"Alright, that's enough. We probably need to go talk to Thorin. We need a plan for when Smaug comes back," Hiccup stated, and then

turned to his Night Fury. The other Vikings went to follow his lead, but a shout stopped them. The Vikings turned back to see a Monstrous Nightmare land precariously on what little space remained on the ledge.

"Don't bother with that. Smaug is dead. He was slain by a man named Bard. They're calling him Bowman now. I think they wanna make him the new Master," Nori grumbled to himself as he jumped off his dragon's back. Ori followed his lead. The Vikings gaped very briefly in shock, because they'd thought the two Ereborians were dead. "Where is everyone?" the thief asked as he glanced around and saw only the Vikings present.

"They're all in Erebor. Everyone thought you guys were dead when Smaug destroyed Lake-Town, so they all went back into the mountain in hopes of barricading themselves in and keeping Smaug out when he tried to return. After that, Lydia gave Thorin the Arkenstone and they all went into the treasury. They've been acting pretty weird," Hiccup admitted. Weird was an understatement. Thorin had been shouting nonsense as they created a barricade at the gates, saying that if anyone survived the destruction of Lake-Town they would be at the doors of Erebor demanding money. That mere thought seemed to spur the others into action. It was all quite confusing. Their home had been destroyed, of course they would want money, and why shouldn't Thorin give it to them? It was kind of his fault for provoking Smaug unnecessarily, prompting him to leave the mountain to destroy Lake-Town and promising to return and finish what he started eleven years ago.

Nori and Ori exchanged looks when Hiccup said weird. "You don't think?" Ori began, and then trailed off, his face troubled and uncertain.

Nori shook his head worriedly and hopped back onto his dragon with Ori following his lead once more. "I don't quite know what to think _nadadith. _It's too soon to tell. Besides, it shouldn't have set in so quick. Vikings, let's go. We might have another problem," Nori stated. Then he took off for Erebor and the others were quick to follow.

There was no reception when they arrived, no one to welcome them back as the dragons flew through the relatively small opening of the blockade. Not even Dori waited, and that was a surprise. The eldest son of Ri had been beside himself earlier, nearly inconsolable in his grief and worry. When the Vikings had left earlier, Dori had been hovering just in the shadows, calling after them to be careful and bring him a full report should there be any sign of his brothers. Now the hall was dark and silent, nothing moving except for the uneasy shifting of the Ereborian's dragons in the shadows nearby. They sensed something was off as well, and didn't like it. Lydia's Cauldron shuffled into the light and rumbled as it looked at them with pleading eyes.

"Ere, what's the matter with 'em?" Nori asked as he once again slid off his dragon's back. Ori hopped down as well and the Monstrous Nightmare didn't even hesitate to hurry towards his fellow dragons in the shadows.

"They must sense that something's wrong," Astrid stated as she looked sadly at the dragons huddled miserably together. Had the Ereborians

even bothered to feed them? "Let's go. I think everyone is still in the treasury," Astrid continued, and they all moved through the mountain halls that stretched far overhead, tall enough that even Smaug had lived there comfortably for eleven years.

As they drew near the treasury, leaving their dragons behind, they heard raised voices, and then all fell quiet, before heavy footsteps came towards them. They rounded another corner, and came face to face with Thorin Oakenshield. In his hands was the glimmering gem, the Arkenstone. At the sight of the stone, Nori and Ori both fell to a knee and chorused, "Hail Thorin, son of Thrain, son of Thror, King Under the Mountain!" The Vikings quickly followed their lead. Thorin smiled gently at the sight, but Ruff noticed it didn't quite reach his icy blue eyes.

"Rise, my brothers, my allies. You needn't bow before me. I owe thanks to you for your help. A share of this treasure is yours as well." Nori and Ori immediately stood up, as did the Vikings, and Thorin bashed heads with the younger Ri brothers. "We had feared you were dead. Dori was inconsolable and Bofur was rather upset as well. Come, let us show them you are alive and well, and then we will celebrate," Thorin stated, sweeping an arm towards the treasury and leading the two Ereborians to the only room that was well-lit and glimmered golden. The Vikings followed, but Ruff held back, tugging on Hiccup's arm to get him to do the same.

"Hiccup, something's not right here. Thorin is acting weird. Did you see his eyes? There's something wrong with them. The others are acting strange too, really distant. Only Nori and Ori seem okay, but they just got here. I think we should leave," Ruff said, and Hiccup looked surprised by Ruff's statement.

Out of all of his friends, Ruff and Tuff were the most thoughtless, the two who always wanted to leap headfirst into danger. If Ruff sensed something was off, then it must be really obvious. So why hadn't Nori and Ori noticed yet? "We can't just take off, Ruff. We don't know anything about Middle Earth. We'll be fine for now. Until we can get someone to take us back over the Misty Mountains, we're just going to have to deal with it," Hiccup stated, and then dragged Ruff with him into the treasury, to be greeted by a strange sight. Only Bofur, Dori, Frodo, and Bifur seemed to have noticed Nori and Ori and greeted them appropriately.

The rest of the Ereborians were preoccupied with the gold piles. Dwalin was wielding a sword plated in gold, swiping experimentally at the air in front of him. Bombur was gathering up gold plates and cups while humming happily. Lydia had donned a silver gleaming shirt and several bracelets and rings. She was in the process of clasping silver and gold braid clasps into her hair. Gloin and Oin were gleefully shoving coins into their pockets and Balin seemed to be searching for something. Ruff's attention was pulled away when there was a commotion from another entrance to the treasury.

"Auntie Bilba do I have to wear this?" Kili whined, tugging at the tunic he now wore. Bilba slapped his hand and then straightened the tunic. "It's uncomfortable," Kili insisted, and then Bilba slapped her nephew upside the head. Then she turned to the elder of her nephews and slapped him upside the head for laughing at his brother.

"Stop fiddling with it. You'll get used to it. It is traditional for heirs of Durin," Bilba insisted. Thorin nodded approvingly as he went over to his wife and nephews. "The Royal Wing was relatively undamaged, and a lot of the clothes were preserved. We decided to tidy up a bit," Bilba explained, gesturing to her dress. It was a nice but practical dress. However, Ruff was confused as to why Bilba was barefoot as well. "Lydia, don't you want to try on a dress? Frodo, surely you would appreciate some nicer clothes, too?" Bilba called, and Frodo dutifully trudged to his mother's side while Lydia froze and then she dove, slipping and sliding down a particularly large pile of gold and disappearing from view. Bilba pouted and Thorin just chuckled.

"I don't think new clothes are necessary Mother," Frodo began, and the look on his face was just hilarious. However, Hiccup seemed to take pity on the prince, and he stepped up to Thorin and Bilba.

"Actually, Frodo promised he'd give us a bit of a tour of the mountain," Hiccup said, and Frodo shot him a grateful look. Bilba sighed and conceded with a warning to be careful, and Frodo hurried off with the Vikings before his mother could change her mind.

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"Thank you for that, Hiccup. My mother has become quite caught up in the idea of giving us a life of luxury and making us into model heirs to the kingdom. I must admit, I'm not much interested in the formalities of the kingdom. I'd rather visit the royal library," Frodo admitted with a small chuckle. Fishlegs latched on to one thing the Crown Prince said, perking up immediately.

"Library?" Fishlegs asked, and Frodo glanced at the stout Viking, and a small smile crept across his face.

"Yes, library. Would you like to?"

"Yes please!" Fishlegs shouted, and Frodo leaned away slightly, surprise showing on his face at the Viking's outburst, and then that same subdued smile appeared on his face and without a word he turned and started off down one of the many halls within the mountain. Fishlegs followed close on his heels while Hiccup wasn't too far behind, actually quite curious about the royal library. Hiccup and Fishlegs quickly engaged Frodo in a conversation, and Astrid soon joined in, which was why none of them noticed Ruff, Tuff, and Snotlout slip away.

"Can you believe that? Who wouldn't be interested in being a king? I can't believe Frodo would rather sit in a dusty old library with some crumbling old books," Snotlout scoffed once the three were far enough away from the others to not be heard. "Anyway, where are we going, Tuff?" Snotlout demanded, crossing his arms over his chest and glaring slightly at the male twin.

"I don't know. Anywhere but the library, though. I saw some cool places when we were running for our lives from Smaug. We've got some exploring to do," Tuff cackled, and his sister snickered, nodding in agreement. Snotlout just sighed, knowing this could end very badly. But that didn't stop him from following the twins to a passage way that was even darker than the rest. Tuff paused just before they

entered the tunnel, and then he said, "Uh, maybe we should bring Hookfang. I can't see anything down there. Snotlout, go get your dragon." Snotlout bristled at Tuff's command, ready to punch him in the face, but Ruff did it for him.

"Moron! Why didn't you think of that earlier?" she shouted, and Snotlout couldn't deny he felt a rush of affection for the girl. She was clearly the brains between the two. Why had he spent so long chasing Astrid again? He thought for another moment, and then had to admit there were some similarities between Ruffnut and Astrid. Well that the most confusing thing he'd ever stopped to think about. As he turned to go back for Hookfang, telling the twins to wait right there for him, he vowed he's stop thinking and just jump from now on. Thinking was for Hiccup and Fishlegs.

Snotlout meant to return to where they left the dragons, and he meant to go quickly, but he soon found himself lost. The dark-haired Viking became quite frustrated, cursing up a storm in his head as he stormed through the halls, his desperation increasing as he kept walking and found nothing at all. "You do know you've been walking in circles, right?" a voice asked, and this time Snotlout cursed aloud, spinning around to see Fili standing behind him, arms crossed and a mischievous grin on his face. "I saw you from up there," Fili said, pointing up, and Snotlout followed his gaze to see a ledge that was partially exposed to the outside, though whether or not that was purposeful or caused by Smaug was unknown to him. "You were walking for five minutes, just going in one giant circle. I finally decided to help you."

"Thanks. I was trying to get back to the entrance to find my dragon," Snotlout admitted grumpily. Fili just kept grinning at him and without another word, he led the Viking down a hall he hadn't even noticed earlier. Snotlout stomped after the blond. "What were you doing up there anyway, hiding from your Aunt?" Snotlout sneered, determined to try to regain some of his dignity.

"Partially," Fili admitted, and Snotlout smirked triumphantly. However, it seemed Fili wasn't finished yet. "Uncle Thorin also wanted me to send a couple of messages out. Nori told us Smaug was dead, you see, and like the prophecy said, the ravens returned to the mountain. So I sent a raven to the Iron Hills and then another to whoever might have survived the assault at Ered Luin," Fili explained. Snotlout sobered at the reminder of Alvin chasing them. He'd been so caught up in the adventures that they'd had across Middle Earth, Alvin and his Outcasts.

"Do you think anyone will respond?"

"Yes. I know Dain will, at least. The Iron Hills have been our allies for a long, long time, and most of the Ereborian refugees were given shelter there when the mountain fell eleven years ago. Now that the Worm is dead and Uncle once more holds the Arkenstone, they will honor the call and return to aid their king," Fili explained, his face somber and strong conviction in his voice. He didn't doubt for a second that the Iron Hills would respond, but said nothing of Ered Luin.

"What about Ered Luin?"

Fili hesitated this time. He thought for a moment, and then

truthfully responded, "I couldn't say for sure. Our kin in Ered Luin lived in poverty even before Smaug took Erebor. They were very bitter and refused to accept refugees. Even with the Arkenstone in our grasp, they might not respond. That's to say in anyone survived Alvin's onslaught."

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"This is madness."

"What was Alvin thinking, leading on his wild goose chase?"

"We were the few who survived those swimming dragons and the battle in that stupid city, and now we're going to die in this forest?"

"I really wish we still had those dragons."

Alvin twitched irritably as his soldiers muttered quietly to themselves. Night had fallen over the forest that their stolen map marked as "Greenwood." At least, it seemed like night had fallen. It was impossible to tell with the thick canopy overhead. Greenwood didn't seem like an appropriate name for this place. Greenwood implied a bright, happy, peaceful place, and this forest was anything but. He'd lost some of his soldiers to giant, man-eating spiders earlier in the week, and before that they had lost all of their dragons to a strange phenomena that none of them could explain. It was as though the very wind had turned against them and sent them plunging into Greenwood.

"Do you think it'll be the spiders that get us? Or starvation? Or...something else?"

"This place does things to your head, lad. We'll be lucky to escape with our sanity intact."

"Would you all shut up already? I canno' hear meself think!" Alvin roared, and all of his men finally fell silent. Alvin breathed a sigh of relief, but then froze when he heard the rustling in the trees and the bushes all around their camp. It was as though they'd been surrounded by a large group of people. Then the whispering began. It was soft, quiet, but gradually grew louder, and it was a crescendo of a language none of them recognized. There were harsh trills interwoven, cackles, and high screams that had many of his men covering their ears. "Who are you? Show yourselves, cowards!" Alvin finally bellowed, and then suddenly everything fell silent. The rustling and whispers both stopped and the forest seemed to be holding its breath, waiting.

Then a blaze of fire burned all the foliage surrounding them, and Alvin shielded his eyes while his men ducked down, cowering in terror. White spots filled his vision for a moment, and it was difficult to tell as he squinted, but he thought he saw shadowy, disfigured silhouettes crouched low to the ground around them, formerly where trees had stood. Then his attention was drawn to a dark figure standing in the center. A rim of fire seemed to surround the figure, and Alvin squinted, trying to make sense of what he was seeing.

Come to me.

"W-What?" Alvin exclaimed as a loud, raspy voice seemed to echo in his head. His men recoiled when they heard it, and he internally scoffed at their cowardice.

**I will give you the world. **

I will give you power.

I will give you...Erebor.

Alvin smirked broadly at that. He liked the sound of that. He said as much aloud, and he sensed that if it could, the shadow would be smirking evilly. It sent alarms ringing in his head, but that instinct was buried deep and he didn't even have to try that hard to ignore it. His men slowly stood, calming themselves as they also heard what the shadow promised, greed lighting their eyes and grins stealing across their faces.

Yes...

Come to me...

My servants...

...

My slaves.

* * *

><p>Ha! There! Finally, chapter 18! See, now this new plot is cooperating with me. The other one really wasn't. EasternWolf23, the Fili and Kili moments were for you! Anyway, guys, you know what to do.</p>

REVIEW!

Rhettbutler/Victor- While the idea is a good one, I don't think I could ever rewrite this in a different version. In all honesty, this is a huge project, one of the longest fanfics I've ever written, and I really do not want to attempt something like this again because, as I've said, my plots have a tendency to run away. The only way I would ever do something like this again is if I were to go back and rewrite everything and I don't want to rewrite this one. Some of my earlier fanfics, yes, I will absolutely rewrite, but I really like where this one is going and how it is written so I have no intention of rewriting it or writing it in a different version. Besides, I try to avoid writing something with a similar structure. I am truly sorry if you did want to see this in a different version but I just cannot do it.

End
file.